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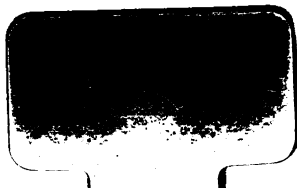


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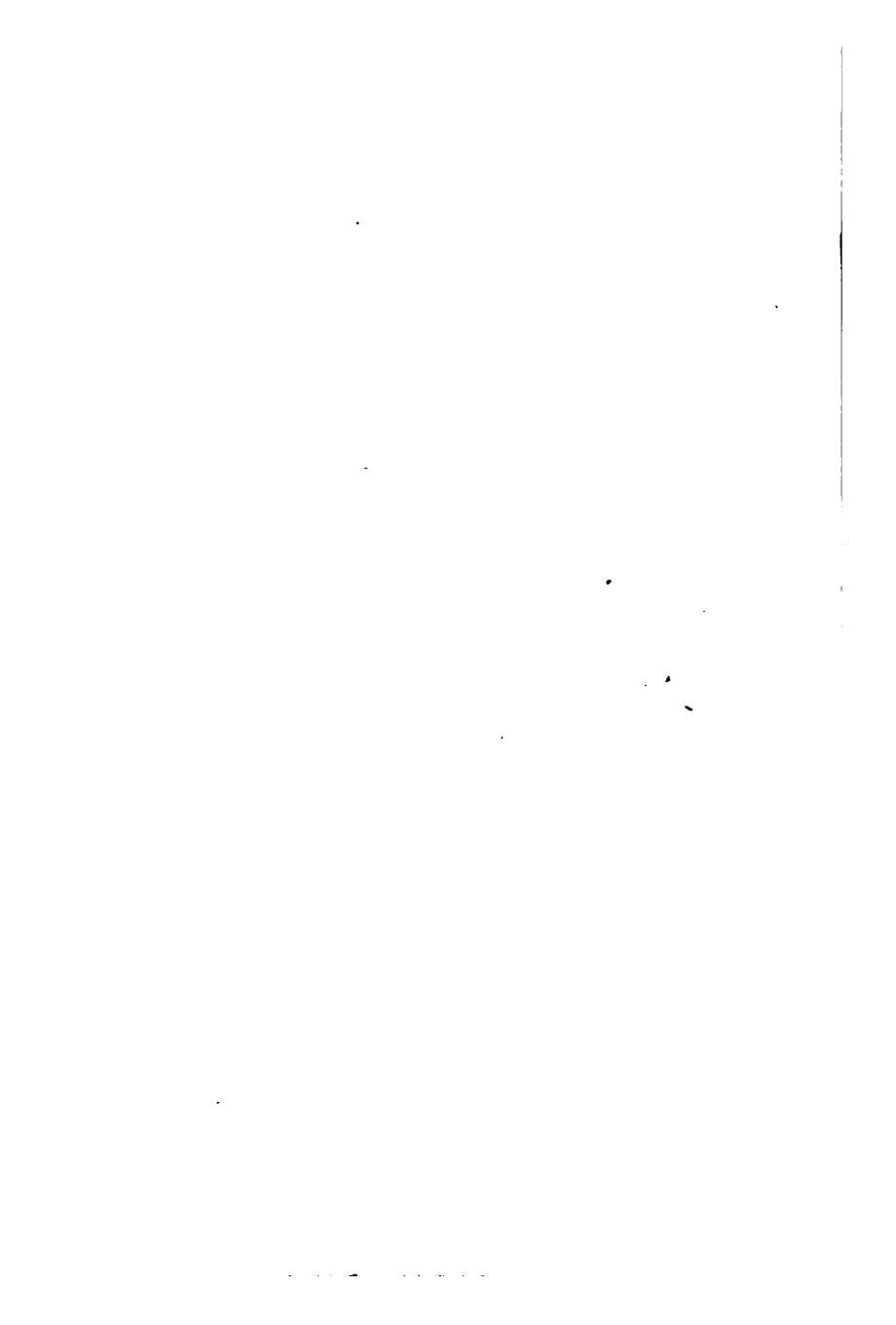




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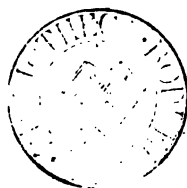
Destruction of the Coolie Ship.

THE
LETTER OF MARQUE

AND
TALES OF THE SEA AND LAND.

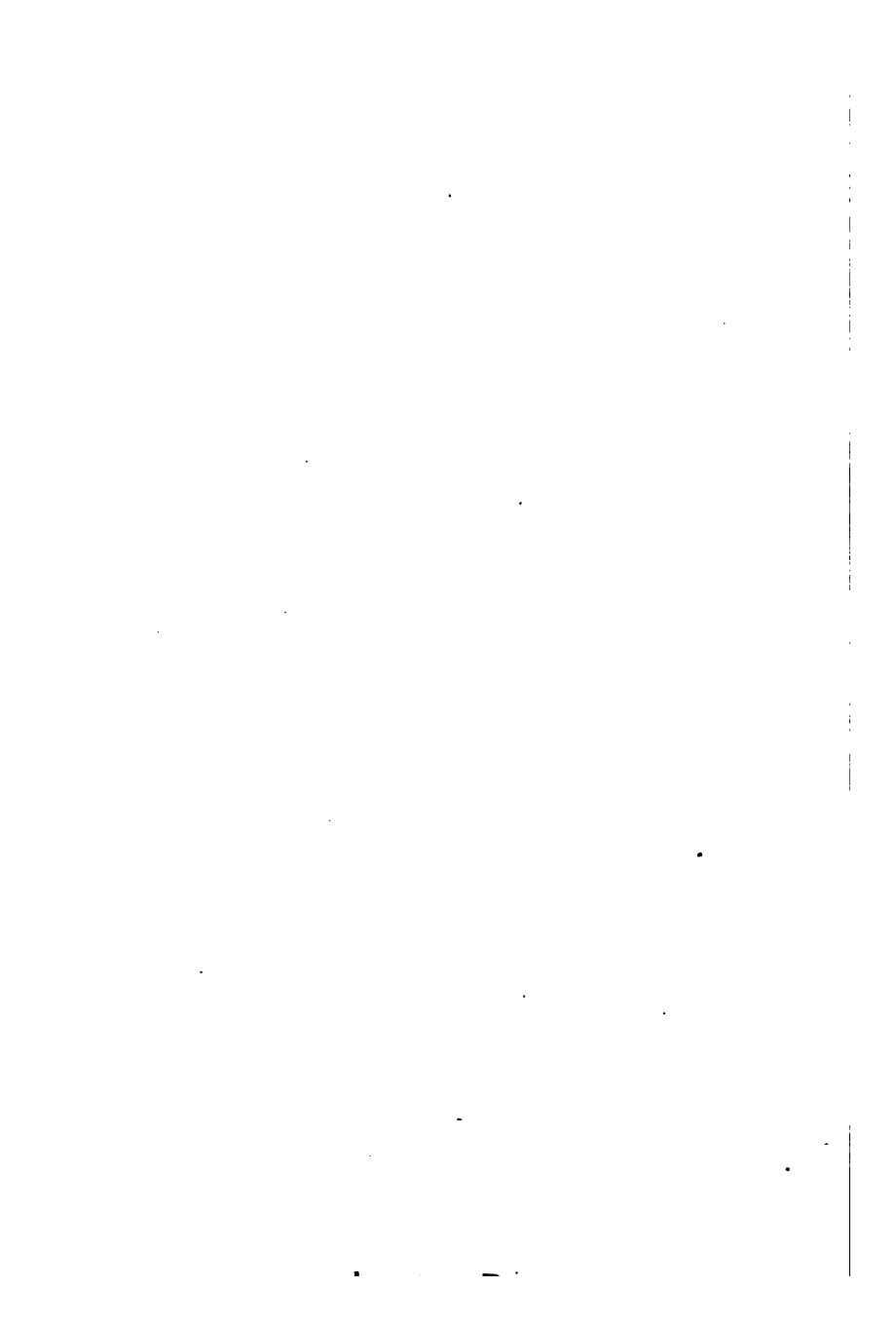
BY
LIEUTENANT C. R. LOW,
(LATE I.N.)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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TO
MAJOR GENERAL J. T. BOILEAU,
R. E., F. R. S., F. R. A. S.,

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF KINDNESSES

EXTENDING OVER MANY YEARS,

This Book is Dedicated

BY HIS ATTACHED RELATIVE,

THE AUTHOR.



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P R E F A C E.

"Ne sutor ultra crepidam," as Apelles said to a Crispin, who showed critical acumen in the faults he found with an ill-painted slipper in one of the pictures of the great artist, but ascending to other parts, betrayed the grossest ignorance.

We are always reminded of the aptness of this well merited rebuke whenever we see advertised in the columns of the daily press a "new and original sea-tale from the pen of that well-known writer for boys," who, when we read on, turns out to be what sailors intolerantly call, a "land-lubber." We have a lively recollection of the impression produced on youngsters and oldsters, midshipmen and lieutenants, by the perusal of some of these works. Some wag of the gunroom reads out select passages, which convulse his auditory by the absurd attempts of the "favourite" and prolific author, to make clear, in nautical phraseology, an impossible manœuvre, in short to describe the indescribable.

It will be answered, perhaps, that these sea-tales are not intended for critical readers, but are for schoolroom consumption. Well, but then we repeat, "*ne sutor ultra crepidam*," and it is very uncomplimentary to our boys to take it for granted that gross errors of nautical expression or description are immaterial as regards them, because they have not the technical knowledge to detect them.

The multitudinous writers of naval fiction are not only *landsmen*, but occasionally also *land-ladies*—we hope we are not unconsciously guilty of the cardinal literary sin of punning—so that the fair sex rival the lords of creation in describing what they don't understand. Indeed, we would wager "all Lombard Street to a China orange"—rather long odds, we should say—that some among them couldn't distinguish the truck from the keelson; and if they were sent to fetch the key of the latter, would go "straight on end" to the ship's steward. We should like to make them all "toe a line" on the quarter-deck, and subject them to a competitive examination, when, we would be bound to say, half of them would be spun on such an elementary subject as "knowing the ropes." This at least should be required of those writing of sea life, even though we cannot easily expect to find a successor possessing the nautical experience, and descriptive, humorous pen of a Marryat or a Chamier, whom we respectfully

salute as our superior officers in literature as well as on the quarter-deck.

In many respects sailors possess the same idiosyncrasies of character as in the days of the great war. They grumble a great deal, but so long as they are left alone by scheming agitators, have no more definite notions of the wrongs inflicted on them by their country than had Canning's needy knife-grinder, in the "Anti-Jacobin," of his political grievances. "Story, God bless you, they have none to tell." Sailors also like hugely an extra "tot" of grog, and in this respect they do not differ much from their forefathers, who, on the eve of the "glorious 1st of June," expressed a wish for "a little more grog," to which Howe replied, "Let 'em wait till it's over, and we'll all get drunk together."

On one other point, we fear they are not equal to their invincible predecessors. That able and tough old sailor, Admiral Rous, once wrote to the Times, to the effect that at sea we cannot serve two masters; if we stick to the "tea-kettle"—as he contemptuously calls steam as a motive power—we must eschew the sailing ship, and forfeit our traditional pre-eminence as seamen. We fear there is too much truth in the dictum of the veteran admiral, who, though he may seek to combat the inevitable, is entitled to the respect of every sailor, as the officer who, in the year 1835, saved the *Pique* frigate by the display of

great fertility of resource, combined with consummate seamanship.

Almost all our service afloat was passed in sailing vessels, ranging from a brigantine carrying five guns and fifty men, to a full-rigged ship, and in many seas from the Cape of Good Hope to China, so that unless we have "grounded on our beef-bones," (to use an expressive nautical phrase) owing to lengthened residence on shore, we ought to know something of a ship. Having thus presented our credentials to our constituency,—to wit the boys of England whether on land or afloat—it only remains for us to sign ourselves their old friend and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, 20th September, 1872.





THE LETTER OF MARQUE.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF MY BOYHOOD.

IT is now some fifteen years since the death of my grandfather, Commander Bulwark, an old and very distinguished naval officer.

Some of my readers, not very conversant with the mysteries of promotion in the navy, will ask, "If your grandfather was a very distinguished officer, how is it that he did not attain higher rank than that of a commander, which, as all the world knows, is the same as a major in the army?" I reply to my guileless interrogator, "Promotion at the Admiralty, like kissing with the ladies, goes by favour."

Who, indeed, during his boyhood, has not known some old naval lieutenant who fought and bled under Nelson or St. Vincent, and who was shelved when the "war of giants" was finally concluded by the Peace of 1815, laid up in ordinary, like the line-of-battle-ship in which he served, and suffered to drag out his existence on a half-pay of about £80 per annum?

The old man, whom some of us middle-aged men can remember, has gone to his rest now, and Death, who

spared him so many years that one might almost think he had forgotten him altogether, did at length put his sickle to the over-ripe ear, and garner him also in his great storehouse. Such an one was my grandfather. He had no interest with the Tory Government of those days, or indeed, with the Whigs either, when at intervals, few and far between, they came into power; he had no interest with "my Lords," and so he never rose above the rank of commander, which he attained in the year 1799; but for all that he was "distinguished," and had fifty times been near enough Frenchmen in battle to see the whites of their eyes.

A brave, kindly, albeit gruff, old gentleman he was, and I propose to throw into the form of a narrative some of the incidents of his life. They were nearly all gathered from his lips, for, though I did not commit them to writing at the time, they impressed themselves deeply on my memory, for those parts of his adventures which most amused my brother and myself he used to repeat at our request. With this preface I will "begin from the beginning," as children say. I will, with your leave, stand on one side, and let the old man tell his tale to you without my acting as an intermediary.

My boys, as you have before heard, my father was a field officer in the East India Company's service, and often has he declared to me that better and more considerate masters there never were, which is more than I can say for my more aristocratic employers.

I was born in Dublin, and within three months of my birth my parents returned to India, where my father had always held good staff appointments.

I remember all my early Indian life well, but will pass over it with the mention of only a few reminiscences.

When the time came for us to go to England for our education, I was six years old, and my brother thirteen months older. Officers seldom keep their children out there after this age, as the climate is considered, and I think rightly, to be deleterious to the constitution of an English-born child; and as there are not any really good schools out there, not even in the Hills, it was decided that we should go "home" for our education.

Alas! England was no home to us, and I can never forget, old man as I am, and though I have seen much of the woes of life,—I can never forget the heartbroken grief of my poor mother as she parted from her two children, never more to see them in this sad world of partings and tears. Was it a presentiment of coming evils that weighed down her gentle spirit, and overwhelmed with an uncontrollable grief that heart which a strong faith and steady hope had hitherto supported in the trials she had known from her early girlhood? Whether such forebodings oppressed her I know not, but I can picture her now as with sobs she clasped me in her arms for the last time, and would not be comforted when they took us away from her.

When coming down the Ganges to Calcutta, an accident occurred to me which nearly obviated all necessity for the further adoption of plans for the prosecution of my studies. I will tell you how it took place. On our way down the river from Benares we used to "bring to" every night in a very primitive method. The "budgerow"—a large vessel much resembling in architecture and general appearance the Noah's Arks with which

children amuse themselves—is brought near the banks of the stream, and a spot selected for the night's halt. A couple of the boatmen jump out with a cable having a stake at the end ; this stake is driven quickly into the ground by means of a mallet, the rope is "paid out" from the vessel until the stake is secured, and then it brings the craft up "all standing," as they say at sea : the budgerow thus lies during the night as near the bank as the draught of water will allow. The jackals used to come down and keep us awake with their hideous uproar, until my father perhaps seized a gun and shot one of them, when the others howled at a more respectful distance. Communication was kept up between the shore and the budgerow by means of a single plank, and we were instructed by our parents on no account to cross this narrow gangway without holding some one's hand. One night, when we anchored as usual, my father took us on shore for a stroll. Well, we boys, like disobedient daring monkeys as we were, after playing about for some time, determined to cross the plank by ourselves, it would be such grand fun ! So, as our parents were not in sight, we essayed the dangerous task ; my elder brother crossed in safety, and I, of course, followed. I had got about halfway across, and was just congratulating myself on accomplishing the feat, when, by some means, my foot slipped ; down I fell ! and I remember no more. Stay, I have a sort of flashing recollection of the water closing over my head, and I can distinctly remember the feeling of going down, down, down,—and then all was dark.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself lying on the small table in the principal apartment in the budgerow, with my father standing by me rubbing my

body, and my mother leaning over me and sobbing. Oh ! their joy when they discovered I was not dead, but had escaped with a broken collar-bone, and had only been half drowned.

Talking about breaking my collar-bone reminds me of a somewhat curious circumstance. We must have been rather an adventurous or unlucky family, for my eldest brother, who subsequently went into the army, while at Eton broke his leg ; my other brother—the same who was my companion during this escapade—fractured his arm while we were playing leap-frog, not two years after the occurrence of the episode I have just related ; and I, as I have shown, broke my collar-bone. The strange coincidence in connection with these family mishaps, to which I have above alluded, was, that my father, at different times, and in various ways, during many years' travels in all quarters of the globe, and in his service in the army, was unfortunate enough to suffer all three accidents.

To return. The *Coromandel*, the ship in which we embarked for England, was one of the Company's trading ships, and a fine teak frigate-built vessel she was. What a couple of young rips we were, to be sure ; and how incessantly we disturbed the equanimity of the old lady passengers on board the *Coromandel* by our hairbrained tricks !

We were always running about the rigging, and swarming "hand-over-fist" up ropes, to the imminent peril of life and limb, until the captain and chief mate swore they would "rope's-end" us. With all my harum-scarum ways, I recollect well the extraordinary effect the first sight of the sea had on my mind. Like most boys bred

inland, I could form no notion of its grandeur and vastness ; but when it broke on my astonished vision the morning we arrived at the Sand Heads, like the poet, I experienced the indescribable charm it exerts over all, even the most thoughtless minds ; though, unlike the poet aforesaid, I could not clothe my ideas in his glowing language :—

“Type of the Infinite ! I look away
Over thy billows, and I cannot stay
My thoughts upon a resting-place, or make
A shore, beyond my vision, where they break.”

I will not recount how that soon after we sailed I was seized with the whooping-cough, and gave it to all the children on board,—there were thirty-two besides ourselves,—until the din, as we coughed in chorus at meal-time, was a thing to be heard. With my usual ill-luck, I nearly came to an untimely end during the voyage. It was in this wise :—

We two boys were always lugged up naked out of our warm “bunks” every morning at six o’clock, when the sailors were washing decks, and were dragged, “will-he, nil-he,” to the huge tub full of water, below the break of the poop, from which the buckets were filled. Into this tub we were pitched head foremost, like pigs when undergoing the process of scalding ; then, after scrambling out the best way we could, and before we had recovered our breath, any of the seamen who cared for the amusement splashed a bucket over us, and so, half-drowned and shivering, we scuttled down below to the soldier who had charge over us,—for we were taking some invalid troops home, and my father had paid handsomely one of the men to look after us. Blow high, blow

low, we were hauled up from our warm berth ; and it is a wonder that we lived through it all. One morning—I remember it well—it was blowing a gale of wind, yet, as usual, we little wretches were turned out of our bunks : the ship was rounding the Cape at the time, and it was blowing great guns, and oh ! so cold, when we were brought up to undergo our matutinal ducking. After the ordinary amount of semi-drowning had been gone through, with perhaps just an extra dose of buckets, we ran for the companion ladders on being released by our persecutors. The ship was taking great headers into the mountainous sea, while the water was washing about the decks, rendering the foothold very insecure ; suddenly I slipped and fell, the *Coromandel* gave a tremendous lurch to starboard at the same time, and away I went flying along the slippery deck as if shot out of a gun. The large ports were open, and I was just disappearing through the yawning portals of one of them, when a seaman seized me by the leg and restored me, dreadfully scared, but “not one penny the worse,” to the normal position of the human form divine.

“My thanks are due,” as commanding officers say of their subordinates in despatches, to that mariner “good at need,” though I sometimes wonder whether a desire not to be deprived of the butt and mark of his morning’s diversions did not, to some extent, influence him in the performance of this humane act.

Both my parents died in India within five years of our departure, from the effects of that climate to shield us from which we had been sent “home.” “Home !”—Heaven save the mark ! One would have thought that common humanity, not to speak of Christian duty, would

have induced our guardians to treat us kindly, but it was otherwise. I must have been one of those unhappy juveniles who are always committing themselves to sinful courses of action ; at least, to judge by the frequent castigations inflicted on my luckless carcase, one would conclude so. A word as to the couple who had charge of us. People less fitted to bring up children, I suppose, never existed. The gentleman, a clergyman of the Church of England, was a high-minded, honourable man, but as stern and unbending as Rhadamanthus, and as mad—yes, as insane as—well, as a hatter ; that is the conventional simile for a hopeless lunatic, though why I know not ; perhaps *Notes and Queries* can satisfy an “Anxious Inquirer.” He was a tall, spare, powerful man, and the most rigid ascetic I have ever known, even among bigoted Roman Catholics. From Thursday evening, when he took a frugal tea, till Saturday morning, at breakfast, he never touched a morsel of food ; and I can speak for a period of more than seven years, during which I was, to my sorrow, an inmate of his house, or rather asylum. He only drank a little cold water during those thirty-six hours, while, during the whole of Friday, he locked himself up in his bed-room, where he passed the entire day in earnest prayer and devout meditation. He was a sincere Christian, but shockingly severe, a singular combination, reminding one of the saintly hermits who, in mediæval times, betook themselves to caverns and deserts from the busy haunts of men. I have since learned that poor Mr. J—— was universally regarded as a gentleman of unsound mind ; and this was the man—himself in need of a keeper—under whose charge we were placed by our friends ! To give an instance of his

eccentricity. He used to plunge us two boys into a cold bath, summer and winter, without omitting a day, but before doing so would force us to swallow a large teaspoonful of salt, piled up. Poor Nicholas Nickleby, with his brimstone and treacle, was nothing to it.

His wife,—well, she is no more ; and there is much right feeling in the old saying, “*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*,” or, as that wicked fellow *Punch* has cynically, but how truthfully, paraphrased it, “*De mortuis nil nisi bunkum*.”

I revere deeply the memory of the austere, simple-minded Christian, whose whole life was devoted, with a rigid asceticism unsurpassed by devotees of the strictest monkish sect, to the chastening of all earthly passions, mistaken though he might be ; but my friends surely ought not to have consigned us to the keeping of a person notoriously demented—who, in fact, had been obliged to give up an incumbency in consequence of this affliction. His helpmate I can only regard through the dim vista of an unhappy past, with, I am afraid, feelings of a not very Christian character. No ! I have seen men flogged with a cat-o'-nine-tails, and receive fifty lashes, and yet I can truly assert that their sufferings, in some instances, were not as great as those I received at the hands of the insane clergyman, who, driven to flog me by his wife,—who hated my very shadow,—used to lash my body from my neck to my heels, with his thick walking-stick in an access of frenzy, and with a ferocious light in his cold grey eye, that positively makes me, —grown man as I am now, and much as I have seen of brutality since,—that makes me, I say, while I write these lines, shiver with horror at the fearful memory.

Well do I remember how one morning, when 'exasperated beyond command of her feelings by a refusal on my part to beg her pardon for an offence I had never committed, this woman ordered her husband (pliant and obedient to her as a lunatic to his keeper) to thrash me. Seizing a stout stick, he, muscular giant as he was, flogged me with might and main. She stood by, and at length, having gratified her spleen, stopped him, and asked whether I would now humble myself to her. Proud,—stubborn, perhaps; what you will,—I refused, with bitter tears wrung from me by anguish. Again was I savagely punished, again I faltered out a determined denial, saying I had done nothing. A third time I was flogged, until, fainting and mad with pain, I broke down—I was only a child of twelve at the time—and sobbed forth my request for mercy; "I beg your pardon" fell from my lips, but a perfect hell of hate and despair gnawed at my young heart. This, my boys, is no fiction told to touch your hearts with pity, but sober truth. I was friendless, an orphan, and alone, for we lived not on the mainland of England, but in one of the adjacent islands; and in those days of coaches and sailing packets this island was a very "Ultima Thule." I pondered all that day over my misfortune. They left me to myself, for I had been so severely chastised I had to go to bed. I wept as the memory of my gentle mother came over me with its softening influence, and my mind reverted to happy days gone by in distant India. I resolved that night to run away, and determined to try the sea. We lived at a seaport town, and I apprehended little difficulty in getting a ship. My brother, being a favourite with the lady of the house,

was not badly treated, and did not care therefore to join me ; but I was desperate, and fully resolved to brave all the consequences of so rash an act.

Thus it was that I was driven to go to sea.



CHAPTER II.

A CRUISE ON THE FRENCH COAST.

I DEFERRED putting my plan into execution until I was physically fitted to do so, as for some days I could scarcely walk, so severe was the flogging that had been inflicted on me. At the end of a week I felt sufficiently restored to make the attempt. It was at night, about half-past eleven o'clock, that I managed to slip unobserved down the stairs and out of the house.

The wind blew round the street corners in strong gusts, and with the icy chilliness of a north-easter in the depth of winter. I had some distance, about a mile and a half, to walk before I could reach the quay where lay the trading vessels. After a dreary miserable trudge through the darkness, and carrying a small bundle of clothes, I reached the quay, to which some half-dozen small craft were moored. I was not sorry to get among the oil lamps again, which, few and far between, lit the aquatic thoroughfare, for, to tell the truth, I was rather frightened at the silence and solitude of my walk. I made my way over the coils of ropes, and blocks, tackles, and other gear, which were strewed in my path, and walked on until I stopped

before a schooner which had been discharging her cargo of fruit for the last three weeks. I had been on board of her with some of my companions, and we had at times invested our pocket-money in the purchase of oranges, with which she was chiefly freighted. I knew she traded between the Mediterranean and Liverpool, but, owing to a gale of wind, had been driven out of her course ; she had sprung a leak also, and the water had done considerable damage to the cargo of fruit, which the skipper had therefore to dispose of as best he might.

It was while conversing with the sailors, on those rare occasions when I had any cash to spend, that I learnt that two of the ship's boys had been washed over-board, and that the skipper was desirous of shipping others in their place.

I now, therefore, went on board, and offered my services, which were at once accepted ; I was just in time, for next day the schooner sailed "in ballast" for Liverpool. Thus it was I became a sailor.

Unlucky wight that I was ! I had existed for some years in a continual state of hot water, but I now discovered that I had only fallen "from the fryingpan into the fire." If I was beaten and treated unjustly before, I now suffered starvation in addition to my other misfortunes : I could not stand this, and determined to run away a second time, though, indeed, I began to fear that life was only one long continual state of suffering and ill treatment ; however, evil fortune had frowned upon me long enough, and my estimate of life, I found, was of too sombre a character.

Of the five men composing the schooner's crew one only refrained from knocking me about, but, as I was the

only boy on board since the drowning of my two predecessors, I got monkey's allowance, "more kicks than ha'pence." I learned from this man one day that if I escaped to a man-of-war the skipper had no power to demand me back ; this set me scheming, and one day the long-wished-for opportunity arrived.

We were lying in the Medway, when one of the King's frigates sailed majestically up that river, and brought to not far from us. A gleam of hope diffused itself through my mind ; I would try and swim off to the ship ; I cared little if I was drowned in the attempt, for so consistent and cruel had been the tyranny to which now for eight months I had been subjected that I was prepared to do anything to escape from the hands of my brutal masters, who loved to heap every indignity upon me because, as they took care to inform me, I was the son of a gentleman, and had peculiar notions about cleanliness. As soon as night closed in I lay down, but not to sleep ; eight bells (12 o'clock) struck, the middle watch relieved the two men composing the first watch, and then I rose to make the attempt.

It was a bright starlight night, similar to that so beautifully described by Byron, when Don Juan and Hadée strolled along the beach, and—

"Gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight."

First ejaculating a short but heartfelt prayer for a successful issue to my enterprise, I watched my opportunity while the backs of the men on duty were turned, and, climbing over the bows, dropped noiselessly into the water. I struck out towards the frigate, but had not

gone far when I discovered that there was a current setting seaward, and that I could barely make way against it. The frigate was little more than a cable's length distant, and I could swim half a mile with ease, but had not calculated for this adverse current. Animated with despair, I put forth all my strength, and succeeded in reaching half-way towards my refuge.

I watched by the bows of a distant ship to ascertain whether I opened out any of the lights twinkling on shore, but, alas ! I found by this test of my rate of progress that I was stationary ; soon, I knew, I should be going astern, and then I must be captured by my persecutors, and taken back to the hated schooner. I dared not shout ; I firmly believe I should have been drowned on the spot where I was struggling with the eddying water, when a hail from the man-of-war greeted my ears, "Hullo, there !" a voice sang out ; I answered joyfully, "Help ! or I shall be drowned !" The figure disappeared off the fore-castle, and in a few seconds half a dozen men were running along the lower studding-sail boom, which had been swung out, man-of-war fashion, for the boats to moor to ; in another minute, the cutter was cast adrift from the pennant, and then, on being manned, was shoved off, and made towards me. Oh, my happiness at the thought of deliverance !

But my absence was now discovered in the schooner, and a well-known gruff voice hallooed out to me, "Come back, you young dog, or I'll be the death of you !" I gave no answer, but kept my eyes fixed on my preservers, and my arms striking out with my utmost strength. Now two men jumped into the fruiterer's jolly boat,—one was the dreaded skipper. They pushed off quickly towards

me, but all too late ; the frigate's cutter reached me first, and, half dead with exhaustion and fright, I was pulled in by a couple of sturdy arms. The schooner's boat followed in our wake, the skipper all the time cursing every bone in my body, and vowing he would bring my deliverers to justice for interfering with his apprentice, a threat at which they laughed loudly, and further infuriated the tyrant by jocular questions concerning his "Jordy," as they called the schooner, and personal allusions as to when he had last washed his face. He followed us, and, soon after we arrived within the sheltering protection of the man-of-war's wooden walls, came alongside, and asked to see the captain. The result of his interview with that officer was of a character to astonish him.

Directly I heard Captain Fairfax's name mentioned I pressed forward to see him. A sudden idea occurred to me ; I had an uncle of that name in the navy, whom, however, I had never seen, though my mother, whose favourite brother he was, had often talked of him to me. I rushed up to the kindly-featured, noble-looking man, of about forty-five, who just then came on deck, and gazed at him with earnestness. One look was sufficient ; his eyes and mouth had the same expression of gentleness that characterized my mother's. Throwing myself at his feet, I poured out my tale of suffering and wrong, implored him to keep me in his ship in any capacity, and finished up by mentioning my name, and my belief that he was nearly related to me.

The astonished officer started on hearing my story ; he stooped down, and, after scrutinizing my face closely for a moment, raised me up in his arms, all dripping with

water and shivering with cold and agitation as I was, and comforted me with the assurance of his protection. It was indeed my uncle whom I had encountered under such singular circumstances. The skipper was sent back to his ship with a stern caution, and I was forthwith rated on the books of H.M.S. *Ulysses* as a "volunteer of the first class," and, as such, an officer of the same standing as a naval cadet of the present day.

I will pass over all mention of the early part of my service in the navy, as it is foreign to my experiences in "The Letter of Marque," but I will only say that I saw my share of the hot work then on hand; some other time I may give you an account of my career as a volunteer and midshipman; suffice it to say that I passed my examination as mate, and speedily got my lieutenant's commission.

It was in the year 1793, at the commencement of the war with France, that I received my first command. I was just twenty-two years old, and my uncle, who had stood my firm friend ever since we met on the deck of his ship, the *Ulysses*, succeeded in obtaining for me the "swabs," as we call a "lieutenant's epaulettes," in the service. He knew a good many wealthy London merchants, having often commanded ships of war convoying their ventures, and he introduced me to a gentleman, who was at that time fitting out a Letter of Marque.

My new friend immediately made me an offer; I was to have the command and one-sixth of all profits derived from captures. Being anxious to have an independent command, and caring little about the "main chance" in those days, I eagerly closed with his proposal. The barque lay at Portsmouth, and I went down to inspect her; she

was a fine, smart-looking craft, though somewhat old. As holding his Majesty's commission, I succeeded in getting the assistance of the dockyard authorities in fitting her out.

Within a month she was ready for sea. I beat up for recruits, and, having first shipped some half-dozen old hands who had been shipmates of mine in the service, and who were ready to "swear by me," I had not much difficulty in completing the vessel's complement.

I called her the *Red Hawk*. She was barque-rigged, and of about 350 tons burden; her crew numbered some eighty men, all slashing devil-may-care fellows; our armament consisted of ten twelve-pounders and two thirty-twos, all carronades. This was not a powerful battery, certainly, but then my ship was not built to carry heavy guns; our chief duty lay in harassing the enemy by cutting up his trade, and inflicting as much injury on his commerce as lay in our power. Of course, we were ready to fight should we encounter a vessel of our own size and weight of metal, for the *Red Hawks* would have been unworthy the name of British tars if they had possessed no stomach for a fair stand-up fight, which I take to be one of the chief characteristics of the biped aforesaid.

1

With a fair easterly wind we set sail down Channel; my crew were nearly all old men-o'-war's men, so it required little drill at the great guns to knock them into shape. Hardly were we out of sight of land than we had a taste of the dangers of privateering. A large ship was made out from the mast-head, which proved to be a heavy French frigate. We showed our heels to her, and but narrowly escaped capture: indeed, had not night

intervened, there is little doubt our expedition would have ended there and then by our incarceration in a French prison, a fate worse than death in the eyes of seamen. But by good fortune the night set in dark and tempestuous, and we eluded our pursuer, which, by the first-rate sailing qualities she displayed, must have been one of the swiftest cruisers of the enemy. Our turn now came to play the hounds. On the fifth day we sighted a barque which showed French colours. The *Red Hawk* spread her wings in pursuit, and after an exciting chase of eight hours we overhauled our prey sufficiently to fire into her. A round shot from the bow-chaser "brought to" the fugitive; she let fly her topgallant halliards in token of surrender, and "rounded to" submissively. I sent our first lieutenant to take possession of the barque, which proved to be *La Bastille*, and was rather a valuable prize. Putting a sufficient number of hands on board to navigate her in safety, and keep guard over the French prisoners so as to prevent a recapture, I placed my second officer in charge, and sent her back to England, with directions to her new commander to be at Falmouth that day three months with his men, at which date I hoped to return and re-embark them.

Our next venture was more hazardous and less remunerative. Some twelve days had passed away without anything turning up; we were standing "off and on" the French coast, a little to the westward of Bordeaux, when the look-out-man sighted a schooner; sail was set in a trice, and away dashed the *Red Hawk* as if she sniffed her quarry. The schooner now saw her danger, and—as we thought, fearing to trust to her sailing qualities—ran for the land. We followed in pursuit, Her reason for

changing her course soon became evident ; as our barque neared the coast, under all the sail she could carry, we discovered a semaphore station with a small fort attached. The schooner made for this shelter, and so confident was she of protection that she had the audacity to open on us with a gun she had mounted in her stern. Soon she ran aground under the walls of the small fort, which now also began to blaze away at us. It was to be a "cutting-out affair" we saw ; preparations were quickly made ; our boats were lowered and manned with some fifty men armed for boarding, the guns all the time keeping up a hot fire on the fort and schooner. Away dashed the boats for the latter first ; the French sailors kept up an ill-directed fusillade upon the advancing cutters, but when they saw from our proximity that it had no effect in cooling our ardour,—for the foremost boat was only twenty yards off,—they threw down their arms and bolted, deciding "that discretion" was, in this instance at least, "the better part of valour." It was amusing to see the eagerness with which they made themselves scarce ; their agility in vaulting over the shore side of the schooner, and scampering up the beach to take shelter under the protecting ægis of the fort, was highly commendable, viewed solely, I mean, in the light of a gymnastic performance ; as a "strategic movement to the rear" it was perhaps not quite so praiseworthy. But, ah ! what consolation to skedaddlers in general is breathed in those Hudibrastic utterances—

"For those that fly may fight again,
Which he can never do that's slain ;
Hence timely running's no mean part
Of conduct in the martial art."

But our brave fellows had not done with them ; as commanding officer I thought we might as well, while we were about it, destroy the semaphore station, so our boys, with a loud hurrah, charged up the acclivity. They were so smart in the use of their legs, and followed so closely in the wake of the French sailors, that before the garrison, consisting of some twenty artillerymen, could depress their guns sufficiently to bear on our advancing column, we had gained a footing in the fort.

It was an old dilapidated sort of a work, with none of the modern appliances for defence. After a desperate fight of some ten minutes we remained masters of the position ; the union-jack was hoisted above the republican tricolour, and three cheers given for the king. The soldiers fought well, to do them justice, but they were completely taken by surprise, having no conception that so small a force would dare to carry by storm a fort mounting twelve heavy cannon. The larger number of the garrison leapt over the low ramparts, and managed to escape ; and, as we did not care to encumber ourselves with prisoners, we gave their liberty to the remainder.

Before evacuating the place the semaphore was burnt, the guns spiked and tumbled into the ditch, and the works dismantled. We then marched down to the beach and inspected our prize, which now that it was ebb tide lay high and dry on the shingle ; to our disgust we found she was in ballast, and had not a particle of cargo in her. In a rage my men fired her, and then, taking to the boats, we re-embarked.

Our loss in this affair was one killed and three wounded. Though there was no booty, some damage had been inflicted on the enemy, and perhaps it was not

inglorious to those concerned. Soon after this enterprise was concluded I was enabled to be of great service to the British fleet under the command of Lord Howe. We had seen nothing of any of the enemy's vessels for some little time; indeed, owing to the extreme efficiency of the flying squadrons under the command of such dashing officers as Sir Edward Pellew (afterwards Lord Exmouth) and others, privateering was not so remunerative a speculation as in days of yore.

One morning we were under easy canvas, when the fog, which had lain heavily over the sea all night, suddenly lifted. What was our astonishment to behold a large fleet sailing in two grand divisions; the frigates, which act like the light cavalry of an army in the field, were certainly not distant more than some five or six miles. On this being reported to me, I hurriedly ran up aloft to the foretopmast crosstrees; a moment's glance at the ships convinced me that it was none other than the entire French fleet, which, according to the information we had received, had been fitting out for some time past in order to try conclusions once more with the invincible English. I immediately crowded all sail on the *Red Hawk*, but not before she had attracted the notice of one of the nearest frigates; this vessel gave chase, but, after a short pursuit, was recalled by signal from the flagship of the French admiral, who doubtless considered us beneath his notice. I made my way to Falmouth, and posting up to London, informed the Admiralty of the important fact of which I had accidentally become acquainted.

The result was that Lord Howe, after thanking me warmly in person for my information, put to sea forthwith, and gave the enemy the desired opportunity of

again meeting the British fleet in line of battle. Of course, as usual, the Frenchman was beaten, and the "glorious first of June" added another leaf to that chaplet of victory which adorns the brow of Britannia. So the little Letter of Marque—like the jackal to the lordly lion—played a useful though humble part in the drama of that great day.

On my second return into port, the owners of the *Red Hawk* began to be discontented at the amount of prizes and the value of the captures. The ship's expenses were very heavy; competition had destroyed the once fertile field that existed in those seas for such "snappers-up of unconsidered trifles" as the privateersmen. It was decided the venture must either be given up altogether, or a new arena of operations selected; the latter course was, after much discussion, adopted. I carried my proposal of a visit to the waters surrounding Mauritius, or, as it was called, the "Isle of France," for at that time the French possessed not only this island, but also the Seychelles group. My men gladly agreed to accompany me and share my fortunes in those Indian seas, so, after a run on shore, just to spend the pay and prize-money they had earned so laboriously, they rejoined the ship to a man at Portsmouth, and, thanks to the same facilities I had before enjoyed, the little *Red Hawk* was soon thoroughly refitted for her long flight round the Cape. In three weeks she was all "a taunto," and looked smarter than ever.

CHAPTER III.

THE NIGHT WE SAW THE "FLYING DUTCHMAN."

NOTHING of importance occurred during the early part of our voyage. On the second day out we spoke H.M.S. *Bellerophon*, or, as men-o'-war's-men called her, the *Billy Ruffian*, a gallant old ship that has made an undying reputation in the navy, as evidenced by there always being one of that name in the service. This was the first ship we encountered (and during our cruise in the eastern seas we met the old flag everywhere, both in storm and sunshine) of that vast fleet which now for 200 years England has always sedulously maintained to uphold her proud position as the first and chief of naval powers.

The greatest orator America has yet given birth to, —I mean Daniel Webster,—once, in his place in Congress, gave utterance to this truth in a burst of his unrivalled eloquence: "There is no hour," said he, "of the twenty-four which, in one or other of the two hemispheres, does not see her ancient banner flung to the morning breeze, or hear the drum beat, or the bugle-call of her soldiers sound the *réveille*." I fear very much that, as a great naval power, we are not what we were when Lord St. Vincent lay at anchor at Torbay with the Mediterranean squadron of fifty-five line-of-battle ships, the smallest a seventy-four. Fifty-five ships! and that was only one fleet: Britain had more than one such. Nowadays, forsooth, we are contented, nay, indulge in what the Yankees call "tall talk," if we can count some

forty ironclads of all classes. It used to be considered a political necessity by English statesmen that our fleet should equal any two naval powers combined. During the recent American war the iron walls of Britain—which form the chief rampart against invasion—were outnumbered two to one by those of our “American cousins” alone. “We intend, some day, to have that little island of yours,” observed one of these same “cousins” to a military friend of mine travelling in the United States.

We succeeded in sailing through the Bay of Biscay without sighting any cruisers of the enemy, and, with a fair northerly wind, passed the Western Isles, until we got the N.E. “trades,” which carried us near the Line without our having occasion scarcely to touch a ropeyarn. Here, of course, we were becalmed in the “Doldrums” for nearly three weeks, but, at length, catching light breezes, we gradually edged our way to the southward, until one evening, as the men were lolling about the deck, our sails were taken flat aback, and we found the S.E. winds which prevail here, upon us. Every stitch of canvas was spread to the breeze, and away we stretched on a “long leg” of a couple of thousand miles, for the coast of South America. But I will pass over this part of the log of the *Red Hawk*, and will only stop when we come to the remarks entered therein on the night we saw the *Flying Dutchman*. Of course, the ship was, at that time, off the Cape of Good Hope, although a very long way to the southward of it.

The previous day had been stormy and wet, and the rapid falling of the mercury denoted that dirty weather was in store for us. During the course of the night

those strange meteors, so often observed in a thunder-storm at sea, called "St. Elmo's fire," portended the continuance of the gale. This "ignis fatuus" is of a globular form, about the dimensions of a six-pound shot, and emits a pale blue light. Two or three of them now appeared on the trucks and at the yardarms, and the sailors seemed to regard them as the sure precursors of a storm of extraordinary fury. Some of our old salts shook their heads, and whispered in anxious accents their belief that we should have a bad time of it.

Sailors, even nowadays, will buy a child's caul, and take it on board ship for good luck, and frequently they are advertised for sale in the columns of the daily papers; I see one in this day's *Telegraph*, price £10 to *mariners* and others. The superstition that has the deepest roots in the ignorant nautical mind is that relative to sailing on a Friday. This is thought most unlucky; and a very singular circumstance, in connection with this belief, once happened in America, and is related by Mr. Fennimore Cooper.

A wealthy merchant of the United States, desiring to eradicate this ancient superstition from the minds of seamen, hit upon the following method of effectually doing so:—He had the keel of a very large ship laid down on a Friday. He christened her the *Friday*. He gave the command of her, when ready for sea, to an experienced mariner of the name of Friday, whom he took considerable pains to ferret out. Lastly, he sent her to sea on a Friday, and then congratulated himself on his public spirit. She got under weigh, accordingly, for China, with a very valuable cargo, and every one spoke of her as one of the most stately, well-found ships that had

I went below for a minute to mix myself a stiff glass of grog to keep the cold out. I told the second lieutenant I should be on deck soon, so, leaving the poop, I made my way below with the aid of some life-lines. I was dripping wet, but, for fear of going to sleep, decided not to change any of my clothes, and not even to take off my "sou'-wester." I poured out a "second mate's nip"—which I may mention, for the benefit of the uninitiated, is measured by placing the four fingers of the hand by the side of the tumbler, and filling up thereto; qualifying this with half the quantity of boiling water, I sat myself down to enjoy the cordial. After a few sips, a drowsy feeling—caused by the warmth of the 'tween decks, combined with the great fatigue induced by exposure and want of sleep—gradually crept over me. I nodded, then attempted to shake off the delicious feeling of somnolence by taking another sip, but this had a contrary effect; the inducement to doze was irresistible—in spite of every effort my head fell forward on the table, and I slept soundly. I dreamed: it was of a pirate. We had been chased and captured. My crew had all been massacred, and I alone was preserved, but it was to gratify the devilish cruelty of my captors. I was to be flogged with five hundred lashes, and then, if I survived, was condemned to walk the plank. I heard my doom pronounced, and a shudder swept through my frame. Suddenly a loud voice was at my elbow: "Sir! the *Flying Dutchman*! Come on deck!" I awoke with a start. By my side was standing the quartermaster of the watch; he held in his hand a lantern, and as the light fell upon his face, I was struck by the horrified expression that pervaded every feature.

"What's that you say?" I answered, jumping up and staring at the man, for at first my mind was confused with *Flying Dutchmen* and pirates, and then, without waiting for an answer, I shouted, "Beat to quarters. We'll give them a hard fight for it."

The man kept his eyes fixed on me, but did not move. "D'ye hear?" I called out. "What are you gaping at me for, like a stuck pig? Look alive and tell the first lieutenant to beat to quarters." So saying, I rushed past the fellow, who evidently thought I was demented, and mounted up to the deck.

Here I met a number of agitated faces. Turning to the lieutenant, I asked him angrily what all this confusion was about. I was now thoroughly awake, and aware also that I had confused my dream with the report made to me by the quartermaster.

The officer quickly answered: "Sir, there is a strangely-rigged ship nearing us on our port quarter, and the men declare she is the *Flying Dutchman*. I sent the quartermaster of the watch down to report the circumstance to you."

"Where?" I asked. "Point her out to me."

He did so. Turning to the point indicated, there, sure enough, a singular sight met my eyes. There was a large ship, probably of 1,000 tons; antique was her build, and the fashion of her rig was of a character the like of which I had never seen before, though I remembered something of the kind in old prints of ships of a bygone age. Her stern towered high above the water and was conical-shaped, while a huge lantern, suspended over it, was swinging about—owing to the motion and the tempestuous wind. She was pitching heavily, and as

she for a moment "yawed," I caught a glance of her bows and her whole length. A crowd of men could be seen on her decks when she rolled over on one side, while some figures appeared on the poop. They were all looking at our ship, but there was no movement among them. Had they been, indeed, creatures of another world they could not have looked more spectral. The whole illusion was terribly perfect in its realization of the old legend, and filled me, I own, with a feeling of horror.

"This must be Vanderdecken and his ghostly crew," I muttered to my second in command. "What could their appearance portend on this stormy night?"

The phantom ship was quite close to us when I first came on deck, but as I gazed she seemed to glide swiftly along away from us. Pitching and rolling violently, the vessel disappeared in the murky gloom of the night, like some evil thing that sought to hide itself in congenial darkness. My men were much disturbed, and did not scruple to show their alarm as they assembled in knots and discussed the terrible visitant's appearance, not a few expressing their belief that some great calamity was impending over the *Red Hawk*. I went down among the crew, and, conversing with the first lieutenant, laughingly ridiculed the whole affair, giving it loudly as my opinion that the ship was some Dutchman from Batavia bound to Holland.

The wind freshened, and with it rose the sea. The sky darkened and lowered over the deep until it seemed positively to rest on the mast-heads; sombre was its colour, and as the good ship ploughed her course through the opposing sea it appeared as if she were going deeper

and deeper into the innermost recesses of some vast subterranean cavern. The night grew pitchy dark, and the squalls bore down upon the ship from one quarter in violent, fitful gusts, as though some demon, bent on overwhelming us, had gathered the four winds of heaven together and was blowing them through a funnel upon the little privateer.

Morning brought no relief, but only served to display those terrors of the tempest that darkness had shrouded from view. The horizon was limited to within a few hundred yards of the ship ; overhead lay the sky like a leaden pall, which looked in its slowly decreasing proportions as though it would gradually inclose us within its fearful embrace, like the prison cell of the unhappy wretch in that hideous Sicilian tale of torture and death which, I dare say, is familiar to those of my readers who have perused the annals of the Inquisition.

The seamen worked well, but in silence, for they could not dispel the gloom which, like a nightmare, weighed upon their minds, as the remembrance of the dread stranger of the previous night recurred to them. The storm raged on without a sign of abatement. The heavy seas broke on board occasionally and swept the decks, carrying away the pinnace, which was lashed amidships. To prevent the danger of being swamped, I was obliged at length to have part of the bulwarks stove in, to carry the water off, for the scuppers were wholly inadequate for this purpose. Towards the afternoon, as some of the watch were employed on the fore-castle "flattening in" the sheet of the fore-topmast staysail, a tremendous billow, mounting its crest high above the ship, fell on board with a crash that shook every timber and spar on

board the *Red Hawk*. As the resistless sea eddied down over the break of the forecastle in furious cascades it carried the ill-fated seamen with it along the decks, then as the ship gave a lurch to port, as if conscious of the great need it had to relieve itself from the vast body of water which threatened to sink it bodily, the poor fellows were hurried back with the wave. Away they were swept into the seething ocean, and just for a minute we could hear their agonized wail for help. One moment we saw their heads and arms struggling deep down in the black abyss formed by the receding wave, then they appeared borne aloft on the dazzling white crests of the madly-careering waters, and then in another moment they were lost to sight and sound in that chaos of warring elements.

The ship, relieved from the superincumbent mass, slowly righted herself, and met the next charge of ocean cavalry proudly and defiantly; the gallant craft rode over the billows, and seemed to trample the chargers of the enemy under foot as they glided from beneath her keel and disappeared astern. It was a fearful and unequal battle the *Red Hawk* waged, for she was leaking badly. Her old wounds opened, and the water made its way freely into the hold. The carpenter came aft to me, and reported that the ship showed signs of breaking up. I sought to argue him out of this belief, and charged him by no means to apprise the crew of the state of affairs. The men worked nobly and uncomplainingly, though almost worn out with fatigue; a large number of them also had received injuries through falling spars.

So night closed in: a fearful night it was, and little hope had any of us, officers or men, including the veteran

carpenter, an old warrant officer in the navy, that the ship would weather out the night. I remained on deck. About seven bells in the first watch (half-past eleven) a heavy sea again broke on board, carrying away one of the cutters from the davits. As the ship, thrown nearly on her beam-ends, and labouring heavily, returned upon an even keel with a terrific jerk, a cracking noise was heard aloft. I looked up and saw it was the fore-topmast that had gone; tottering and swinging about like a drunken man, it fell to leeward. The main-topmast for a moment resisted the great strain brought upon it, but ineffectually; it succumbed at length, and wrenched off the head of the mainmast a little below the cap. Of course the mizen-topmast could not stand alone, but shared the fate of its fellows, and so, in as short a time as I take to tell it, the ship was involved in wreck and ruin. Some of the falling spars whirled through the air close to where I stood, and the whole *débris*, carrying all its accompanying mass of gear and top hamper, fell overboard.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR a passing minute I was overpowered by the magnitude of the disaster, but my presence of mind soon returned. Springing down to the quarter-deck, I called out to the crew to follow me and cut away the wreck, which, as it was hanging about the ship, endangered her very existence. Every man on board answered my appeal; and, with axes and tomahawks, we speedily hacked away the mass. Fortunately the sea, seemingly tired out with the work of destruction, at the same time

ceased its violent attacks on the helpless hull floating entirely at its mercy. There was a temporary lull while we cleared away the wreck, which fortunately floated astern harmlessly, for had it fouled the rudder it might have rendered the *Red Hawk* unmanageable.

After this the gale moderated, and soon a break in the sky, and a gleam of sunshine, gladdened the hearts of the ship's crew with the prospect of fine weather. As soon as it was practicable all hands turned to with a will, and we set to work "jury-rigging" the old barque. Our spare spars, having been well lashed amidships, remained to us, and with these we managed to rig a fore-topmast, and get a top-gallant-yard across for a fore-topsail-yard. We also succeeded in rigging a jury main-topmast, though we had to do without a mizen-topmast, as the supply of spars was exhausted; however, we got aloft some sort of a spanker-gaff, for we had lost the old one, and, having a spare driver, set it. With courses and topsails, reduced to a medium size between topsails and top-gallant sails, and with trysails and fore and main staysails—we were well enough off in what are called "fore and aft sails"—altogether we managed to do tolerably, and only prayed our ill luck would not throw us in the way of a French man-of-war, from which we could not hope to escape.

As for carrying on our predatory pursuits, our occupation was gone; for how could the *Red Hawk*, out of which we could just screw some five knots under the most favourable circumstances, hope to overhaul the most sluggish of French merchant ships? Under the present adverse conditions she resembled her mamesake the proud bird of prey when its wings are clipped and it

is powerless to pounce on its prey. "Yet there was life in the old bird yet," and when all other resources failed we had recourse to stratagem.

I should have put in at the Cape for repairs, but at that time that part of southern Africa was in the possession of the Dutch,* and, as our political relations with that nation were not very cordial when we left England, I did not know but that I might be detained, or that war might break out before I had completed the necessary repairs. I therefore resolved to make the best of my way to Bombay. It was very provoking, but, whereas before our misfortune we never saw a French sail, now that we were shorn of our plumes several trading ships of that nationality passed us, some even showing the Republican tricolour at the mizen peak, as though in contempt for our helplessness. Any moment also we might expect to fall athwart hawse a man-of-war, and then, alas! for "*la belle France*" and a dirty French prison, for by the accounts of those who had escaped from these places of incarceration for prisoners of war in that country, the dens in which wild beasts belonging to travelling menageries are confined were infinitely preferable to them. However, as the days passed by, and week succeeded week, we became less anxious, and trusted good luck would waft us into Bombay in safety; we had already crossed the line, when all fear of capture was lost in disgust at seeing so many of the enemy's merchant vessels pass us unmolested. At length I determined to adopt a ruse so as to gain at least one prize. I only awaited a favourable opportunity.

One morning, directly the look-out took his first scan

* The English gained possession of it in 1794.

all round the horizon, he descried a large, full-rigged ship standing in our direction. The word was passed to the deck, and the officer on duty came to report the fact to me. I took my way aloft, and, with the aid of a first-rate glass, made her out to be a French merchant ship, homeward bound, in all probability from the Mauritius, or Isle of France, as it was then called, which at that time was under the French flag. To carry out my preconceived plan, for which this seemed a favourable opportunity, I hoisted the British ensign. Soon the stranger answered with her flag. Directly the tricolour fluttered up to her mizen peak I gave orders to put the helm hard up, and square away the yards. I intended to make a feint of running away, and as we were close-hauled to the wind, this evolution was necessary. All hands were amazed at the order, and some doubtless thought, to judge by their astonished looks, that the skipper was gone mad, but, nevertheless, they obeyed with alacrity. The manoeuvre had the desired effect. The enemy, after standing on a little, changed his course the necessary number of points for chasing. I rubbed my hands with glee, and descending to the deck, ordered the men to their quarters for action. The Jacks now understood what was my object in running away from the Frenchman, and, with the greatest good humour, fell into their stations. The guns had been secured inboard, for, not being considered of any use in our present crippled state, they had been run in. They were now cast loose, the magazines opened, and everything prepared, so that at a signal the gun-ports could be opened, and the enemy favoured with a taste of our mettle. On came Johnny Crapaud, doubtless thinking it fine fun to turn bully and seize a small

barque of "perfidious Albion." That morning and every morning, he, the said Johnny, was only thinking how best to evade the omnipresent and invincible cruisers of the British Navy, and now, *collé qui collé*, he was driven almost to chase, and, aha! capture the miserable dismasted Englishman fleeing from his wrath.

The stranger of course overhauled us; so, to keep up the delusion, we doubled like a hare, and, "hauling our wind," steered "full and bye." Doubtless revelling in this new sense of glory—we all know Frenchmen will die for *la gloire*,—he speedily followed suit, like a keen hound, to continue the simile of the chase. Our seamen lay down at their quarters, quite concealed by the bulwarks, chuckling inwardly and uttering jokes audibly, as they watched the Frenchman fall into the trap laid for him. A fine fat prize he would prove to be was the unanimous verdict, as we marked how deeply the barque was laden.

I walked about the poop; my first lieutenant, Mr. Buckle, taking charge of the guns' crews on the quarter deck, the second lieutenant having command of the foremost battery. "On a wind" was the *Red Hawk's* best sailing point, and I was surprised at the good fight she made of it, notwithstanding her jury rig.

The Frenchman still overhauled us, and soon she was something less than a quarter of a mile distant, when she actually had the impudence to fire a shot at us. The pop-gun—it must have been a three-pounder—was discharged at the Letter of Marque, and though, from the short distance, one would have thought it was something like firing at a hay-stack, the projectile ricocheted in the water nearly a quarter of a mile on the starboard side.

of seeing the heavy topsail yards go creaking down the masts until they rested on the caps. Now she was ours.

I lowered a boat and directed my second lieutenant to go on board with an armed crew and take possession. As soon as he had pushed off, and was within a few yards of the barque, I opened all my gun ports and ran the guns out, at the same time ordering the French officer, still with the pistol at his head, to warn his countryman not to resist, as we were an English privateer, and I would blow her out of the water if any opposition was made to my seizing her. All this he did with the most commendable obedience. To enforce my threat I fired a blank cartridge at her; but no further demonstration of the warlike character of the *Red Hawk* than a display of her guns was necessary, for after a few moments' consideration, and, I suppose, a fair amount of swearing, the skipper betokened his having surrendered at discretion by hauling down his jaunty tricolour.

No opposition was offered to the boat's crew, and in a few minutes the flag of Old England was hoisted at the mizen peak, thereby denoting that *La Fraternité* was our prize. A crew was sent on board to navigate her to Bombay, with directions to make the best of the passage and await my arrival there, and the first lieutenant went in *La Fraternité* as her acting captain.

I took on board my ship all the French sailors, and also a quantity of spare masts and other spars, so as to fit the *Red Hawk* with a better jury rig, and then we parted company. I forgot to mention that the prize's cargo was a very valuable one, consisting partly of a large quantity of bales of the most valuable Chinese silks, which she had transhipped from Mauritius, and she had also filled

up with rice and spices ; so that altogether the ship and cargo, we calculated, were worth some £60,000.

For some days after this interesting event nothing occurred worth chronicling ; but on looking over my notebook I find that on that day week, when, indeed, we were nearing the coast of India, there is an entry of a circumstance which will be perhaps thought of sufficient interest to merit recording.

One morning an officer reported to me that one of the seamen had been found in a state of intoxication in the spirit-room, which, in the *Red Hawk*, was constructed in that part called the ship's "run." By some means he had managed to get unperceived below hatches and had forced the lock of the storeroom ; then, creeping along on his belly, he had got to work at one of the casks, and, having possessed himself of a gimblet, wherewith to make a hole, and a straw to insert into the hole when pierced, he had made himself perfectly comfortable until discovered in a state of beastly inebriation. The fellow (his name was Watkins) was brought up on deck and placed in confinement on the quarter-deck with a sentry over him. I decided to flog him as soon as he recovered his senses. On the following day he awoke from his drunken sleep, and, on discovering his position, seemed greatly surprised. Food was offered him, which he refused, though he drank water freely. As the day advanced he evidently by some means gathered what was in store for him—in all probability he saw the sail-maker employed at making a new green baize bag in which to keep the dreaded cat-o'-nine-tails. However that may be, Watkins became very morose, and sat on the deck with downcast eyes and muttering to himself.

sea, but from the cruisers of the enemy, which at that time committed great depredations on British commerce, issuing, as they did, from the Isle of France.

At Bombay we found our prize, which had arrived some ten days before us. I immediately sold her cargo, and then tried to dispose of the ship; after some trouble I sold her to a firm trading with Singapore, for a handsome sum of money. The sailors received, each man, the share of prize-money for which they had signed articles on joining, and, though every one pocketed a considerable sum, they got through it all with the alacrity and folly so characteristic of the British sailor. I gave them plenty of leave on shore to spend it while the *Red Hawk* was in dock; and then as soon as they had no more rupees they were glad to "turn to" again, and rig the barque anew from truck to keelson. A better and finer set of men I never sailed with; I scarcely ever had occasion to use the cat, preferring always to discharge the delinquent, and I never had any difficulty in securing plenty of men.

There is never any difficulty in picking up plenty of good men at Bombay, for Jack always arrives there after having experienced the unpleasant restraints of a long sea voyage from England. His advance of wages is quickly gone in carousing on shore; probably he gets "in tow," of some undesirable person, and, being anxious for two or three days' more "liberty" on shore, as he calls it, is quite prepared to barter his liberty for three or four years, or during the remainder of the man-of-war's commission, for a little ready money. This he can do by at once offering himself on board, but, if he is too indolent, there are plenty of "crimps" on shore who will induce him to take the bounty of £5 for a particular ship, thereby

securing for themselves the head-money of £1. Jack, indeed, is unfortunate in the possession of numerous friends all over the world, who look after the honest fellow, and fleece him.

Being short of a few hands, I sent my gunner with instructions to pick up a dozen of as good seamen as he could muster, giving the preference to men-o'-war's men. The old warrant officer returned with a baker's dozen—fine stalwart fellows they were as ever drew a cutlass—and goodness knows, and so will the reader soon, that they were required before long to save the *Red Hawk* from dishonour, if not from capture. But I am anticipating.

CHAPTER V.

I HAD the advantage, while refitting my ship, of having a friend at head-quarters. The superintendent of the Government dockyard I found to be an old shipmate in the navy, and he did all in his power to assist me in procuring spars and gear. Within a month I had the *Red Hawk* "all-a-taunto," and my brave fellows, having got rid of all their superfluous cash, were glad to return to work, and hove up the anchor with a will, as we prepared to set sail to earn more prize-money. There was no thought among them of anything but success, no vision of a French prison disturbed the slumbers of the gallant tars, and yet it was a truly dangerous game we were playing.

So one pleasant morning we bade our friends on shore good-bye, and sailed out of Bombay harbour with a fair

"top-gallant" breeze. During the first fortnight we only encountered a few British merchantmen, but as we got more to the southward and westward we expected to fall in with those of the enemy. I was much pleased with the good sailing qualities the *Red Hawk* displayed. I had taken the opportunity, while she was in dock, of having the ship's bottom scraped and cleaned, and was amply repaid by the increase in her speed. When we arrived somewhat near the latitude of Mauritius a bright look-out was kept for Frenchmen. We chased one or two, but were unsuccessful in capturing them. In every instance night intervened, when, taking advantage of the darkness, they adopted the ruse of dropping overboard a barrel with a light attached, and then, extinguishing their own lights, managed to effect their escape. This want of success exasperated the sailors greatly, and I began to be anxious, for I had steered into the very jaws of the lion, and now found myself cruising about almost within sight of the high peaks of that island. I was prepared to dare a good deal in order to capture a valuable prize, and my former success, when under jury-rig, had emboldened me now ; but yet it would not do to be knocking about for any length of time so near the enemy's head-quarters, for the French admiral might any day take it into his head to send out a smart cruiser, and then if I could not run I must fight or surrender. However, "Courage !" I said to myself ; "I will only stand 'off and on' the island for a few days more, and then make for Cape Comorin." We sometimes actually ran so close into the land, after dark, that the lights of the town could be clearly distinguished. It was a desperate venture ; yet a couple of such prizes as *La Fraternité*, and

my fortune would be made, when I could return to my native land and "live at home at ease" if I desired it.

One morning a large full-rigged French ship was seen standing in the direction of the *Red Hawk*. On going to the masthead I soon made her out to be a merchantman. We were under easy sail, as usual, and, to prevent exciting her suspicion, kept on our course without setting any more canvas. The Frenchman, unsuspecting of all danger so near her own shores, stood on her course, which would bring her within gunshot of us. We felt confident she must fall into our hands without the consumption of any powder,—a matter I was naturally desirous of avoiding, for the report might draw down upon us a hornet's nest of the enemy's cruisers. Suddenly something excited the suspicion of her skipper, for he clapped his helm, "hard down," and "went about;" then, sending aloft a crowd of hands, he made sail on his ship. Fortunately we were between him and the island, so he was unable to run for the land; seeing this he took the most judicious course at his disposal, and, trusting to his ship's swiftness, boldly stood out to sea in a north-easterly direction.

I followed suit. In a minute our rigging was black with the Jacks, who, like "busy bees," swarmed along the yards, and cast to the winds the fair fields of canvas. As soon as everything that would draw was set, all hands crowded to the weather rail and attentively watched for some indication by which could be conjectured the all-important question—Which craft sails the fastest? No doubt the fugitives were still more anxious, for to them it was a question of freedom or captivity. The rate of progress of the two ships was critically scrutinized, and

for nearly an hour it seemed impossible to decide whether we gained or lost ground. Some of the sailors thought we were overhauling her, others as stoutly denied it. So two hours passed. It was now noon, and yet, if any progress had been made, it had been so little as scarcely to be perceptible; certain it was that unless the *Red Hawk* sped over the ground quicker than this, night would set in, and, after all, we should be robbed of our prize. Our fellows were getting savage, when the breeze began to freshen. As the wind first sighed, and yet louder moaned, through the rigging and cordage, we all plucked up hope, for it was an article of belief on board of us that the "old girl" (meaning the Letter of Marque) "was A 1 in a breeze of wind." Yes! now we were overhauling the Frenchman, and our gallant tars brightened up, and rubbed their horny hands as they looked at each other with glee. First congratulations were exchanged in a doubtful key, and then, as surmise gave place to certainty, the groups of sailors broke up; the fiddler was loudly called for, and the "loud laugh" betokened anything but the "vacant mind," while the double-shuffle and nautical hornpipe, performed to the tune of "Jack's the lad," denoted the pleasing fact that the typical "toe" of that jovial biped might, with propriety, be described as "light" and "fantastic."

By half-past two o'clock, to speak colloquially—"five bells," to put it in nautical phraseology—the *Red Hawk* had crept up so close to the enemy that the foremost guns were cleared away, with the intention of trying to induce the fugitive to bring to with the persuasive tones of their "loud-mouthed thunder." Now the starboard gun was loaded, and the captain of the piece of ordnance

reported the fact to the lieutenant of his battery, who reported it to the captain (that is your humble servant), who turned round to the helmsman with instructions to "yaw the ship a couple of points."

The helm was put "up," the *Red Hawk* fell off the wind slowly, till I sung out "steady," and then, turning back, gave the word of command to the captain of the gun—"Fire, when the gun bears on her stern port." Round flew the wheel, while No. 1 at the bow gun chimed in merrily with "Aye, aye, sir." Half a minute had passed, when, at a signal from the petty officer, the lighted match was applied to the "vent" of the gun (it was before the time of "detonating tubes" and trigger lines), and "bang" went the eighteen-pounder, and "whiz" went the round shot, plump into the stern gallery of the Frenchman.

"Hurrah!" echoed all over the ship, as the admiring shipmates of Ben Spencer, the captain of the gun, greeted the true aim of the honest fellow. This was evidently the only thing the French skipper wanted to induce him to make up his mind. Taking in his studding-sails, he lowered his royals, hauled up his courses, and rounded to without another effort to escape. We approached, and then I gave the order to shorten sail and lower a boat. In a few minutes the first cutter was pulling for the ship with the first lieutenant in charge; now he reached her, sprang up the side "like a bird," and the sight of the British ensign, fluttering up to her mizen peak, quickly assured us of her being our lawful prize, captured by our "sword and spear," or rather, to speak less poetically and more according to fact, by our great guns and small arms.

Cheer upon cheer broke from our decks as the symbol

and the hatches were to be "battened down" fore and aft, while a couple of seamen were to be left at each hatch with loaded firearms and peremptory instructions to shoot any one of the prisoners attempting to force his way through the hatches. This was soon done, and the indignant Frenchmen were warned of the fate that would await any man seeking to escape from confinement below. There was little time to be lost, for the stranger was coming down before the wind at a great rate. A hawser was passed over the stern of the *Red Hawk* and secured to the "bits" on board the merchantman, and the men whose duty it was to remain on board her, were directed to cut it as soon as I hailed them to do so from the Letter of Marque. All the prize crew but the six hands told off, now returned on board my ship, and, before the action commenced, I cast her off, so as to enable me to manœuvre more freely.

There was no particle of braggadocio about my gallant seamen. They all knew how momentous were the issues at stake, and it made the most reckless of them grave: upon the result depended the question of life and death to some, of freedom or captivity to all. Soon the strange ship was within about a couple of cables' lengths' distance of us, and the action would now speedily commence. She turned out to be a vessel of nearly twice our tonnage, and I counted with a feeling somewhat akin to dismay the number of her gun-ports: out of twelve ports on her starboard side, now nearly abreast of us, frowned as many pieces of ordnance, while we could only show eight on a broadside. I do not mind owning that I regretted the rash resolve at which I had arrived; however, it was now altogether too late for repentance, for I

should have forfeited for ever the confidence my men reposed in me had I shirked the approaching duel. "No," I inwardly said, as I nerved myself for the stern work before me; "the die is cast, and there is no retreat without disgrace."

The scene of bustle and preparation the deck of the *Red Hawk* had presented was now succeeded by the most perfect, I might almost say painful calm. A few minutes were only necessary to convert the tidy cleanly craft into a perfect machine for the slaughter of human beings and destruction of wooden walls.

It was a noble and soul-inspiring sight to see the guns with their black muzzles, so soon to belch forth fire and smoke and death, protruding through the gun ports, while round each 18-pounder was gathered, in steady discipline and in due order, the knot of men, the gun's crew. It was a fine sight also to see the deck groaning with the weight of round shot, and shell, and canister, and grape, as well as bar shot to cut the enemy's rigging in case it might be required. The powder-boys stood at their stations with their little leather magazines for cartridges in hand. Poor boys! they looked clean now, but soon they would be grimy with the smoke of battle, and perhaps some of their pale childish faces would be flushed a deep scarlet with their heart's blood.

It was with a genuine feeling of pity I cast my eye upon a little delicate-looking boy who served one of the quarter-deck guns. I had tried to induce him before we left England to remain with his parents, but he had implored me so earnestly to allow him to serve in my ship and fight the French—boys in those exciting times talked of little else—that I was obliged to yield to his entreaties.

A young hero he was, and now that the yearning wish of his life was about to be gratified, and he was to take part in a real action, the boy seemed as if inspired with that "rapture of the strife" of which poets write. He now looked up at me, and, catching my eyes fixed on him, smiled with a cheerful, proud expression in his blue eyes and fair face that positively startled me. The youngster was more self-possessed than I was, or, for the matter of that, than any of the stalwart seamen, who were brave as it is possible for any of mortal mould to be, but who yet could not conceal the slight nervousness that must precede the moment when the "cannon's opening roar" dispels to the winds all such womanish tremors, and fills the heart with the ferocious longings for blood that lie dormant, I presume, in the soul of man as in the lower animals, and that have full play in that licensed saturnalia of blood called battle.

There astern of us lay the prize, and as I turned to look at her—the cause, like another Helen of Troy, of all this coming contention—the scene was suggestive of one often seen in the jungles of India, when a tiger awaits, with his paw on the slain bullock or other carcase, the advance of some equally ferocious lord of the forest, who, sniffing the blood from afar, determines to decide the question of property by wager of battle.

The two ships were now within cannon-shot of each other, when a slight movement of her head as she answered the helm, convinced me that she was about to commence the action. I was determined to anticipate her, knowing that often the first broadside decides an engagement.

"Fire!" I roared out, and the word of command was lost in the tumult and shock, as a broadside from us

caused the timbers of the little barque to shiver as if about to be rent asunder.

Our salvo was immediately answered by a broadside from the enemy, which came crashing through the bulwarks of the upper deck and whizzing through the rigging, carrying death and destruction around. So commenced the action, while the two ships, firing as rapidly as was possible consistent with good practice, approached each other. Soon the clouds of smoke entirely obscured the hull of the enemy from our sight, but the mastheads, yet visible above, were sufficient for our gunners. I very soon discovered that the Frenchman was trying to cut away our masts and rigging so as to render the ship unmanageable, for hardly had the action commenced when we had the misfortune to lose our foretopmast; a round shot wounded it close to the cap, and it fell overboard immediately afterwards, carrying with it the main-top-gallant mast. Our inferiority in weight of metal soon became very striking, and, though nothing could exceed the cool gallantry of my men and the accuracy of their aim, it was fighting against great odds from the beginning, and now that our foretopmast was gone, our position at once became critical. Not a thought did our fellows give to this catastrophe beyond a hearty cheer and a broadside, while some of them set to work to bring over from the starboard side one of the guns to supply the place of No. 2 gun on the side facing the enemy, which had been dismounted by a lucky shot, and was therefore, of course, silenced. With dogged obstinacy the *Red Hawk's* men fought on; more desperately than ever they worked at the guns; it was the true bulldog tenacity of Englishmen, who knew not when they were overmatched.

Suddenly a cry was raised, "The enemy are going to board!" and behold, through the dense canopy of smoke overhead we could see the trucks on the tall masts of the enemy, overtopping the royal masts of the little Letter of Marque by many a yard, and could discern through the battle cloud that these trucks were nearing us rapidly, while the thunder of the cannon grew louder. Quickly came the stately ship to the death-struggle, and we had no power, had we the desire, to avoid the fierce grapple which was to decide the day; but my noble sailors had no wish to shun the Frenchman's hug, but received the news of his advance with an enthusiasm almost frantic in its intensity. As the great ship bore down she poured in her iron hail of shot, which tore up the decks and crushed through the bulwarks, dealing fearful wounds with the splinters that flew about the confined space. I called away the starboard division of boarders, and scarcely had the men, with boarding pikes and cutlasses in hand mustered amidships, so as to be in readiness to repel the enemy, whether he boarded us in the bows, or abaft over the stern, when the Frenchman struck the *Red Hawk* a terrific blow just about the fore-rigging. In an instant after, a large number of the enemy in a dense crowd jumped down from the lofty sides of their ship, and our decks were at once transformed into the arena of conflict. Ordering all hands to quit their guns, I sprang off the poop, and soon every man on the books of the Letter of Marque was engaged in the most desperate of all fights—a hand-to-hand encounter, that in which individual prowess shines the brightest. It is the most critical test of valour; the best man in a physical point of view comes to the front, and merit may be said

to bring its own reward, for your adversary bites the dust should he be your inferior in the use of the cutlass or in strength of arm.

I cannot narrate the incidents of that soul-stirring combat, as my time and attention were fully engaged in "settling a small affair" with a French officer, who evinced during the business in hand no slight efficiency in the use of the small sword, but of whom I was nevertheless able "to give a very good account," if I may be permitted to carry out the business simile. Notwithstanding his intimate knowledge of the mysteries of "carte" and "tierce," I am in a position to apply to him the prizefighter's description of Mr. Dombey in the admirable novel by Charles Dickens—to wit, "he was as stiff a 'un as ever I seed, but I think it lies within the resources of science to double him up with a blow in the waistcoat." It was in that region—otherwise vulgarly called by boys deficient in good breeding, the "bread-basket"—that I was enabled to give the Frenchman a thrust with my navy regulation sword that, as I said above, "settled the business" out of hand, to my satisfaction at least.

The old man chuckled while he related this feat of his early days to us boys—his admiring auditory—and proceeded.—

It was soon over. We drove the rascals back, some few into the water, where they swam about like rats, and the greater part into the ship from whence they came, and were preparing to follow them, when by some unfortunate means the French man-of-war parted from us; her sails filled, and she drew ahead clear of us. It was a terrible disappointment, and I subsequently learned that the boatswain, whom I had ordered to lash the ships

together the moment she struck us, was killed in the hand-to-hand affair on our decks, and no one else knew of my directions or carried out the operation which would have certainly given her up to us as our prize. As matters unhappily turned out, the enemy sailing ahead of us poured in a raking fire on our decks, which committed great havoc. The issue now was wrapped in uncertainty.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR mainmast had fallen over the side, the foretop-mast and jibboom were already gone, and the *Red Hawk* had become almost totally unmanageable. So matters stood at the present moment. I have stated that before the action commenced, anticipating its severity, I had severed the hawser that bound us to the prize astern. I now made what sail I could on the ship, and trimmed them to the wind, while we opened fire again from the guns. The Frenchman had us, however, pretty nearly at his mercy, for all his spars, except the mizen topmast, were standing. He now sailed round our bows, and took up a position on the other side. We had transported three guns out of the eight on this broadside to replace the same number dismounted or made unmanageable by the enemy's fire, and therefore had now only five 18-pounders to carry on the action, while they still had twelve guns all in good condition. The unequal fight could not last long.

Oh! it drove me almost frantic to think how nearly

victory was in our grasp, and how, but for the death of the boatswain, the Frenchman would have been ours, and we could have considered ourselves victors in as honourable and hardly contested a fight as almost any in the annals of the British navy. I could not bring myself to strike my colours and surrender, and yet every moment was only prolonging bloodshed to no purpose.

The gallant tars still stuck to their guns, like Britons as they were, and uncomplainingly fought on; but the hissing round shot was making frightful havoc in their ranks, and death was garnering in a rich harvest. The first lieutenant was already killed, and I now saw the second lieutenant mortally wounded by a large splinter of iron from one of the five remaining guns, which just then burst, also killing and wounding at the same time seven of the crew. This catastrophe induced me to think seriously of hauling down the ensign, when a shocking occurrence forced me to adopt a course which, as far as I was individually concerned, I would rather have died a thousand times than have ordered. Next to the gun that had just burst was an 18-pounder, of which the little boy of whom I have before spoken was what is popularly known as "powder monkey." He had escaped from death by a miracle, and as he hurried past me just then with his empty cartridge-case, for the purpose of having it refilled, I marked how his face looked pale, and he seemed to shudder as he stepped over the mangled remains of one of his late shipmates. He looked up at me on passing, and again smiled. Poor child! this was a fearful initiation into the horrors of battle. I was in no smiling humour, for my mind was filled with balancing the *pros* and *cons* of the painful alternative presented to

me. The boy was returning to his gun, running with the leather magazine open in his hand. Suddenly as I looked at him, a round shot struck him full in the chest, and sent his body, huddled up and mutilated beyond recognition, in a heap at my feet, while the warm blood dashed into my face.

Hardly knowing what I did, for this circumstance shocked me more than anything I had witnessed during this scene of carnage, I leant down over the body, and thought, as I gently raised it, that a smile passed over the pale features : it might have been fancy, though I am sure it was as I have said. He was dead of course in a moment afterwards ; and, dropping the body, I ordered a young officer standing near me, who had acted as my flag lieutenant, to haul the colours down ; and then, turning to the men, I called out "Cease firing." No words I can employ can convey to you the bitter mortification with which I gave the order, acknowledging my defeat by an enemy whom it was the fashion in the navy in those days to consider as a foe specially created by providence for the British sailor to "thrash" where and when he liked. It was in vain that I took to myself the consolatory thought that we were vanquished by a superior enemy under peculiar circumstances, and that it was chiefly from motives of humanity that I discontinued the action. It was all to no purpose. Scarce had I issued the fatal order and watched with anguish our beautiful flag, ragged and torn with round shot, descend from its proud eminence, than I felt I would give the remaining years of my life to be lord once more on my own quarter-deck. But it could not be. As these vain regrets rushed through my brain, like a lava-flood of

thought, I became faint, and my mind appeared to wander. The scene of blood and death that the decks presented appeared as if passing away. I felt myself falling, and clutched at the air to save myself. Just then a buzzing noise, as of many voices, sounded in my ears, and I heard a voice say, "Send for the surgeon," and then I knew no more.

I believe I lay some days in a state of high fever—at least, I was subsequently so informed,—and when I awoke I could not recognize my new quarters. At first I was oblivious of the dreadful past, but, after a few moments' thought, it all returned to me. I was without doubt a prisoner on board the French man-of-war—in one of the officer's cabins I knew, as my eye caught a foreign sword and a picture of the young General Buona-parto, who had astonished Europe by his brilliant conquest of Italy: it was the first of the long series of surprises that culminated in the year 1809, when, as the Emperor Napoleon I., he was declared by the opposition in the House of Commons to be "invincible on land." I uttered a groan as the memory of the sad termination of the action returned to me, and put my hand to my head, which pained me much. The groan drew the attention of a foreign seaman who was set to watch me, but had fallen asleep, and my hand touched some plasters placed round my head. My attendant—or custodian rather—told me in broken English to keep quiet, and further stated, on my pointing to my head (for I was too weak to speak), that I had been severely wounded by a splinter. Well, I will pass over the dreary interval while I lay sick and wounded, and, what was worse, tortured by vain regrets at my misfortunes.

The ship soon arrived at Port St. Louis, but I was too ill for some time to be moved. When I became convalescent, I was transferred to the prison, part of which was set apart for English prisoners of war. At first my fare was scanty and indifferent; but after I had been there some six weeks, when my health was almost restored, I found myself supplied with little luxuries, which I gathered were taken from the table of the commandant or some other high prison official. This surprised me; but at length I divined the source of these unwonted ameliorations of prison fare.

The commandant was a Capitaine de St. Roch, and the said Capitaine de St. Roch had a very pretty and romantic daughter. Now I dare say you boys, who know and care to hear much more about fighting than love-making, will wonder what connection there is between a pretty girl and a good dinner. It was, then, the Capitaine's pretty daughter that brought me the tit-bits from the table of the stern old governor. I often saw the young lady looking out of a window that overlooked the garden in which I used to "take my walks abroad," under the guidance of a janitor armed with a sword. I took no notice of the young lady at first, for I could not see whether she was pretty or ugly, young or old, and, besides, I did not feel in the humour for love-making; my head ached too much with the ugly wound I had received, and the scar of which I shall carry to my grave; and my heart ached, not with *la grande passion*, but with shame and mortification, for I had learned from the *Government Gazette*, which accidentally fell into my hands while on shore, that the French man-of-war had actually been more severely handled than the *Red Hawk*. No less

than six of her guns on one side had been dismounted or disabled ; but, having her spars mostly standing, she had sailed round to our starboard side, where we had so few guns left fit for service, and opened fire upon us with the whole of her battery of twelve cannon. Hence our long casualty roll—58 men killed and wounded, out of a crew of 110 all told. The enemy's loss, the greater part of which was sustained in the abortive attempt to board, was no fewer than 72 men *hors de combat*—and you may be sure that the official paper did not overrate it—"which testified," as the organ in question continued, in its bulletin of the victory, "to the obstinacy of the engagement, and proved that the gallant *capitaine de vaisseau*, M. Montford, found a foeman worthy of his sword." To return.

I am not naturally shy and ungallant, and when, on questioning my gaoler, I guessed from his mysterious words and winks and smiles the source whence came the "toothsome edibles" referred to, I forthwith resolved not to be ungrateful to the fair donor. I was certain she must be fair, though, for ought I had seen of her features, she might be "the veritable pig-faced lady" herself. To cut short a long yarn, I did succeed in making known to the fair creature that I was sensible of her kindness, and by sundry ways gave her to understand that I would be glad to thank her in person. Now the commandant's daughter made a practice of visiting for charitable purposes the sick inmates of the gaol, but the rule rigidly excluded these visits from being extended to the prisoners of war. One day, however, a little slip of paper was thrown out of the grated window at which the fair unknown used to take up a position whenever I

walked in the garden below. I managed, unseen by the sentry placed over me, to pick up and secrete this billet-doux, as I made no doubt it was. I then said I was tired, and, burning with desire to read the contents of the letter, retired to my cell.

It was written by a lady, who signed herself the daughter of the governor of the gaol, and told me of a plan by which we could meet, if I was desirous of making her acquaintance, and reciprocating the love she entertained for me, and which she thought from my manner was mutual. She desired me to feign sickness, and said she had little doubt but that she could manage to arrange to pay me a visit, as the gaoler was amenable to a bribe; we should have to be very cautious, for if her father, M. de St. Roch, who was a stern, cruel parent, discovered the affair, he would send her away, and then all prospect of effecting my release would be at an end. Of course I did as desired, and that day week had the pleasure of seeing, for the first time, the beautiful and amiable daughter of the governor. I will not dilate on her beauty of person, or on the more lovable traits of her tender, womanish nature. Directly I saw her I was hopelessly in love and vowed to win her. She soon consented to accompany me in my escape, which she had planned before our first interview.

The governor—her governor and my governor—had, like many hard-hearted parents in fairy tales and out of them, decreed that his daughter was to marry a French naval officer, who was also a marquis and possessed large landed estates in his native country. This gentleman, curiously enough, was the first lieutenant of the man-of-war that had captured the *Red Hawk*; and I am

bound to say, for the choice of the governor, that he was a brave officer, and an honourable representative of the old French noblesse, though the marquis was, truth to say, very ugly in face, and his figure, being clumsy and ill-shaped, was not consonant with the *beau ideal* of a romantic young lady like Mdle. de St. Roch. We had good cause, however, to appreciate his noble qualities, as the reader will soon know. After we had met a few times, the lady's father by some means learned that his daughter visited the sick English officer, and immediately ordered the interviews to be discontinued, and so our plans for my escape and our embarkation in some craft proceeding to Europe were frustrated. Fortunately he did not guess the object of her visits to me, but put them down to her well-known solicitude "for all prisoners and captives," and so adopted no ulterior steps, such as her removal from the prison. The friendly gaoler was, however, sent to undertake duties in another part of the prison, and a surly dog of a fellow appointed in his place.

On the following day, owing to my being on the sick list, my dinner was supplied to me from the governor's table. It consisted of curry and rice, a favourite dish of mine ; but I had little appetite, for I was thinking of my continued ill-luck, and lamenting the possibility of never more seeing my *inamorata*. As I listlessly turned over the boiled rice, placed by itself on one side of the plate, I discovered a tiny letter, directed in a well-known hand, hidden at the bottom of the plate. I eagerly opened it, and read the following in French :—

"Do not despair, dearest. There is one channel still left me by which your freedom from this odious prison

and escape to Europe can be effected, and that I feel confident will result in your deliverance. The Marquis de la Marche would sacrifice anything but his honour for me. He will aid me in gaining you your freedom, but you must not ask me the price. Of one thing be certain; you will ever possess my heart, though my hand, by a hard fate, be denied you. Courage, then, and trust in your Amélie."

My first impulse on reading this was a hopeful one; but then I thought, what does she mean by talking of the price to be given for the part the marquis was to take in my release? Could it be her hand? Impossible! I would rather stay where I was till my death than gain my freedom on such terms. Taking into account Amélie's great affection for me, I arrived at the conclusion, after much cogitation, that I had put a wrong interpretation on this part of her letter, and determined like a philosopher to see what turn matters would take, though I inwardly resolved not to leave the island without the fair girl who was about to arrange my escape. A few days passed by without anything further transpiring. The gaol surgeon struck me off his list, and I returned to my former fare, and so ended all prospect of receiving any communication from Mademoiselle de St. Roch.

A week had gone by, when one night I was awakened from my sleep by a noise as of some one turning the key in my cell-door. I jumped up, and as I did so the door turned on its hinges. There were three figures; one of them held a dark lantern, and in him I recognized, as the light fell on his face, the former gaoler. One was a

lady, and it required but a single glance at her tall, elegant figure to identify the devoted French girl. The third person was a stranger to me, but, from the description I had often heard from the laughing lips of Amélie, I had no difficulty in recognizing the Marquis de la Marche. I sprang forward to embrace my fair deliverer. But she, anticipating the action, stepped back, and said in her pretty broken English, "No! not now, for the sake of Heaven. Do not say one word, I pray you, but follow us out with all speed."

I turned to the marquis. He it was who during my illness on board the French man-of-war had surrendered to me his cabin, though I had been too ill to see him or thank him in person. We shook hands silently, and then without a word all four of us left the cell. So well had mademoiselle's plan been laid that no hindrance of any sort was encountered during the time occupied by our exit. We passed through a long corridor, then through a door at the end, which was also opened by a key from the bunch in the hands of my late janitor. We then turned to the right, and another door gave us egress into a garden—the governor's private grounds, and through which he always passed in his visits to the prison. This was his private entrance, by making use of which we avoided the sentries placed at the other doors, and his daughter had secured the duplicate keys her father always kept hung over the head of his bed in his sleeping apartment. The presence of the gaoler was necessary, as on this night he was on duty in that wing of the prison. We now stood under the open sky, and I breathed the pure, fresh air of night with unspeakable delight. I was once more a free man. We crossed over the road, where a coach was

in waiting. It was the private carriage of the marquis, and, at a signal from him, we drove off at a rapid pace.

I could not contain my silence any longer, but asked the marquis whither we were being driven. "To the quay," he said, "from whence we will embark for my ship. She has her anchor 'hove in short,' and her canvas loosed, for she sails for France directly we set foot on her deck." "Your dress might draw attention," he continued, "so I have brought some clothes for you. And, monsieur le capitaine, just slip these things over what you have on. They won't fit you well, I know," he added, with a good-natured laugh. I did as he desired, and will say nothing of the appearance I, a man "rising six feet," presented in the apparel of a gentleman some five feet four inches in height. He had brought sailors' clothes for the gaoler, and, by that time we had finished our toilets, the coach had arrived at the quay. We got out, hurried along its whole length, and down a flight of steps at the end. Here we found a man-of-war's boat waiting for us. We all four stepped in, and the French officer gave the order to push off and "give way," and the cutter was soon cleaving the water on her course towards a craft which lay with her topsails "sheeted home" about half a mile off. The moon had just risen above the crest of the hills in the far distance, and shed its mild rays in rich luxuriance over the sleeping town and silent harbour. Now we reached the ship, and I was astonished to recognize in her the old *Red Hawk*. The first lieutenant of the corvette that captured us had been posted to the command of the prize, with the brevet rank of *Capitaine de Vaisseau*, and with instructions to proceed in all haste to France with despatches to the government praying for naval rein-

forcements to oppose the victorious British navy in those waters.

I remained up to see the barque get under weigh, and then, when the land was rapidly disappearing astern, and all chance of recapture was at an end, I also went below, and soon forgot, in a deep sleep, the stirring incidents of the last few hours.

Amélie told me all the next morning, and had the explanation been made to me in the prison, at the moment before my release, I should never have left the walls of my dungeon, but would have prepared to rot there, till death or a treaty of peace between the belligerent powers had set me free. To be brief, I had gained my liberty at the price of the hand of my fair deliverer. It seems she had promised the Marquis to become his wife, on their arrival in France, if he would rescue the English officer. The enamoured nobleman eagerly accepted the proposal, and hence my freedom. In conclusion, she said earnestly, and with tears streaming down her face—so pale and worn it was, for she had had no rest all the previous night—that henceforth we could be nothing more to each other than friends, for of course she must keep her word. I was dumbfounded; all my dreams of happiness were so rudely shattered; and yet I could not upbraid her, for she had not only released me, but sacrificed herself for my welfare. I did not say a word, but, kissing her hand for the last time, withdrew to my own cabin to brood over my unlucky fate.

I will pass over the incidents of that long and, to me, unhappy voyage, and will transport the reader from the waters that lave the shores of Mauritius to the latitude of the Cape de Verde Islands.

The *Red Hawk*, as she was still termed by her victors, was chased by several English men-of-war, but her speed enabled her to escape. At length, one morning, when we were nearing the end of our voyage, the Marquis astonished me by a remarkable proof of the true nobility of his character. I was standing by myself near the wheel, and Mademoiselle de St. Roch was pacing the quarter-deck alone, with her eyes bent down, for she could not trust herself to allow of our eyes meeting ; indeed, we never conversed, only confining ourselves to polite inquiries after each other's health on meeting at breakfast in the morning. This day my thoughts were occupied with the anticipated pleasure of being once more on European soil, and I was cogitating on the difficulties of a scheme my naval friend and I had concocted, by which I was to effect my escape out of France, and embark in a fishing vessel for England. Suddenly the Marquis appeared on deck. His manner was agitated as he walked up to Amélie, said something in a low voice, then advanced to me, and asked me to follow him below into his quarters. Without a word I did as desired. Amélie was also there. He commenced the conversation abruptly, and with strong emotion visible in his countenance, and evident in his quavering voice. He said that he could no longer blind himself to the fact that Amélie and I loved each other, that he would never wed any woman that could not give him her whole undivided affection, and that, as he had come to the resolve, after long and painful meditation, to yield up fully and entirely all claim to her hand, he hereby resigned her to me. Saying this, and before either of us, his listeners, had time to express our amazement, he placed her hand in mine, and said,

with earnestness, he hoped that neither of us would seek, from generous motives, of which, from our conduct hitherto he knew we were possessed, to swerve him from a determination that, once taken, was with him unalterable.

What could we say? Well, we thought our only course was to thank him for the nobleness of character he displayed in thus sacrificing his future happiness to make those whom he had benefited so greatly, still further his debtors. We did this with all our hearts; the lady, of course—as ladies do on all occasions when their feelings are touched—cried a little. He then left us together.

A few days after this the *Red Hawk* fell in with a fair wind, which carried her into the Bay of Biscay. Now we soon hoped to be anchored in a French port, and preparations were commenced for making our entry with due *éclat*. But, most unexpectedly, an English brig of war appeared in sight, and gave chase. The Marquis was not long in making up his mind as to the course he would pursue. Like a brave sailor, he resolved to fight. The order was given for all hands to repair to their quarters, and thus once again I found myself going into action on board my old ship; but how differently situated I was! Of course I could not take part in the coming fight against my own countrymen, and so had to repair below with the lady, a rôle much against my liking; for as a rule, I preferred to be where powder could be sniffed, and, agreeable as was the society of the lady in question, we know there are times and seasons for all things, and comforting a frightened woman was not my forte. The action commenced, and, for the life of me, I could not keep myself from continually poking my head above the

"coamings" of the hatch, to see how the shots were flying about, and whether the Johnny Crapauds looked "white about the gills." Soon the fight waxed hotter and hotter, until, by the hurrying about to and fro overhead, and the loud cries of the officers to the crew, I knew that the Englishmen were about to adopt Nelson's well-known advice to his captains: "When you are in doubt, you can't do wrong in laying your enemy aboard." Now there was a mighty crash, as the two ships struck, and were locked in the death struggle. Oh! how my heart throbbed with a wild and almost uncontrollable passion to join my countrymen in the terrible hand-to-hand strife overhead! But then I could not in honour raise a finger against my brave preservers. As I paced up and down the darkened cabin, for the hatches and gratings were secured, I cast my eye upon Amélie, of whom I am ashamed to say I had not even thought for the last few moments. There she was on her bended knees, praying with an intense earnestness, while tears flowed in streams down her cheeks from her large eyes, which were raised to heaven. She prayed aloud in this supreme moment, and I caught her accents as she pleaded to the Almighty for her brave and devoted countrymen. In passionate language the young girl asked that they might be successful in the struggle, and supplicated Him to spare the life of the noble-hearted friend who had so unselfishly secured our mutual happiness. Her words, though uttered deep down in the closed hold of the ship, were almost drowned in the horrid sounds of Death's revelry above. It was, without doubt, a hardly contested fight; the battle swayed backwards and forwards, but at length the fighting appeared to set more abaft, and the uproar decreased. I

knew from this that the British tars were victorious in one more hard-fought action, and my heart leapt to my teeth with joy ; but yet I dared not give vent to my feelings, for there beside me, with her beautiful dishevelled head buried in the cushions of the "state-room," half kneeling, half reclining, but wholly abandoned to her grief, lay the form of Amélie de St. Roch. She knew well also that the battle had gone against her compatriots, and, like a true Frenchwoman, was overcome with pity and passionate sorrow. As I stood looking at her, a noise was heard overhead, then a flood of light fell upon the prostrate figure, and then the person who had removed the gratings from the hatches called out in a light, cheerful voice, not like that of a man recently engaged in a mortal duel, "Hallo ! any one down there ? Show a leg up on deck, d'ye hear ?" Following close upon the words of this rather singular injunction, which might have been all very well in "clearing the lower deck for action," but was hardly appropriate where a lady was concerned, appeared a young officer, certainly not more than twenty, dressed in the well-known garb of a lieutenant of the Royal Navy.

He stopped when he saw a lady, and said in excellent French, "Je vous demande pardon, madame ; si j'avais su qu'il y avait une dame dans la cabane, je ne serais pas entré sans permission."

Lifting his hat, he was about to retire, when recognizing in him one of my midshipmen that I had knocked into shape while first lieutenant of the *Blunderbuss*, of forty-two guns, I astonished him by calling out, "'Vast heaving there, Honourable John, and salute your superior officer !" He remembered me at once, and we had a fraternization.

land of Mauritius. A peace was soon after patched up between the English and French, and all the old crew of the *Red Hawk* were and returned home.

Now, boys—I speak to you youngsters who take pleasure to read this book—I hope some of you have amusement from my adventures, and the record of the Letter of Marque."

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THE PIRATES OF THE PERSIAN GULF.

AT all periods of the world's history pirates have exercised their nefarious calling and desolated the coasts of every maritime country ; but instances in which an entire nation or tribe have lived openly by plunder are, happily, exceptional.

Pirates are usually the outcasts of society afloat—men who, having violated human laws, and forfeited their lives, plunge recklessly into the excitement of murder and robbery on the high seas. In “the good old times” we know the Barbary states existed chiefly by rapine, and the buccaneers on the Spanish Main might almost be dignified by the appellation of a nationality.

In the Persian Gulf, within comparatively recent date—that is, in the early years of the present century,—there existed a powerful tribe of Arabs called the “Jow-assamee,” whose ostensible and openly-avowed calling was piracy. They existed chiefly on the fruits of their marine depredations, and when these were not satisfactory—

when they had a bad season, in short—they turned their hands to the more honest occupation of pearl-diving and fishing.

There were other tribes having the same predilections,—namely, the Menassir, Beni Yass, and Mahama ; but the Jowassamee were the most dreaded by all peaceful traders, both on account of their numerical strength and their warlike capabilities. They numbered nearly 20,000 warriors, and possessed upwards of 1,500 vessels, some of them of 400 tons. The coast on which this tribe flourished is still called the “Pirate Coast,” and extends from the town of Ser, near Cape Mussendom, to the Bay of Bahrein, a distance of some 350 miles. The capital of the Jowassamee was the town of Ras-ul-Khaimah, or Cape Tent. When they were in the plenitude of their power, early in the present century, they not only swept the narrow waters of the Persian Gulf with their “bug-lahs,” but dared at length to measure their strength with the men-of-war of the Hon. East India Company.

I served some years on board a sloop-of-war with which, in those early days, they attempted to play some tricks ; but they caught a Tartar when they thought to capture the *Elphinstone*, as you will agree with me when you have listened to my tale, which, I may mention, I have heard related while serving on board the old craft.

The *Elphinstone* then, you must know, was an 18-gun, teak-built sloop-of-war. She would be thought nothing of nowadays,—would, in all probability, be scoffed at as an “old tub” by the modern race of seamen ; but when she was built, some fifty years ago, she was considered one of the handsomest ships in the service, and one of the fleetest too ; and when I was on board her, many years

after the time of which I am writing, she was still as staunch as the day she was launched ; and as for being a good sea-boat, I never knew a better. Perhaps, as an old inhabitant of her wooden walls, in which I have passed so many happy days, my opinion may be rather too flattering ; for sailors, as all the world knows, are somewhat like lovers as regards their ships. She is peerless in their eyes : like the beauty of the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, they think—

“ Age cannot wither, nor custom stale,
Her infinite variety.”

Well, the sloop was sent up the Persian Gulf to lend a hand in putting down piracy. Captain N—— commanded her,—an officer of the old school ; a first-rate seaman, never a better ; stern, yet jovial and jolly off duty ; a good friend to the smart seaman or midshipman desirous of learning his duty, but the very deuce to a skulking foremast hand or youngster coming under the definition of *C. H. B.* (Company's hard bargain). He was much respected on board the *Elphinstone*, owing to the reputation he had acquired for courage and dash, and was very popular in the service, for he always gave his crew plenty of leave in port, and was above all acts of petty tyranny, which, be it known to commanding officers, does more to militate against the popularity of the naval service among men-o'-war's men than the fear of the cat, which has no terrors for the good seaman.

It is not the new-fangled system of placing seaman in the first and second class that will attract sailors to the navy, for it has been proved to be inefficacious. No ; let our authorities rather try whether greater facilities for

leave and a less exacting *régime* when off duty on board ship, would effect their purpose ; and who knows but that a return to the old practice of serving out two "tots" of grog a day on board Her Majesty's ships might not work wonders ! I have heard some of the best seamen I ever sailed with say that this limitation to one glass per diem has done more harm to the service, in the way of getting the best men, than anything else. It would be a good thing for Jack if he could do without grog altogether ; but then he will not, and we must take the honest fellow as we find him, and strive, moreover, not to let the breed die out by driving him to other countries. But to return.

The *Elphinstone* soon arrived on her cruising-ground in the Persian Gulf. As she had shipped a number of fresh hands at Bombay, to complete her complement, there was a great deal of drilling going on on board, especially with the great guns and small arms. The order of the day was cutlass or musket exercise before dinner, and gun-drill between one and four o'clock. The men were hard at it all day and every day, until they were as smart with Brown Bess as soldiers, and could knock the thirty-twos about in the style characteristic of British sailors. Then, at night-time, in the middle watch most probably, the drums would beat to quarters, and all hands had to "turn out" and lash up their hammocks ; next, "tumble up" and stow them ; and then cast adrift and load the guns. The order would then be, "fire three rounds, quick firing." This done, the old skipper if he was satisfied, would give directions to "secure guns" and "beat off."

They knocked about the entrance to the Persian Gulf

for some time, but saw nothing in the shape of pirates ; one or two trading vessels, ship or barque rigged, and a good many native craft passed up or down, but these were unmolested ; and on hailing a large barque, and asking whether she had sighted any suspicious " buglahs," her skipper answered in the negative. So Captain N—— decided upon steering for Bushire, to give the ship's company fresh provisions, for it was some two months since the *Elphinstone* left Bombay, and, in those days, lime-juice was not distributed among seamen as in our time.

On his arrival at Bushire, Captain N—— communicated with the Political Resident, and learnt from him that the pirates were as audacious in their attacks as ever, and he expressed his surprise that the gallant officer had not encountered some of them ; for he (the Resident) said he understood, from reliable private information, that there was a plan in contemplation to capture the *Elphinstone*, as the pirate chiefs, emboldened by recent successes, would not rest satisfied until they remained undisputed masters of the inland sea in which they carried on their depredations.

After a short stay at Bushire, during which the *Elphinstone* took the opportunity of filling up with wood and water for a long cruise, she sailed down the Gulf, keeping a sharp look-out for anything suspicious. At length the sloop arrived off Muscat, and for a day or two " stood off and on " the coast in the vicinity of that port. On the evening of the second day a small craft was sighted coming down under all sail ; she bore up for us, and we soon made her out to be a " buglah." The distance between the two wanderers on the " trackless way " was quickly reduced, and presently she lowered her huge mainsail and hoisted out hersolitary " dingy," which these traders

always carry stowed inboard amidships. Two men only put off in her ; one was pulling a pair of sculls, the other steered with his hand over the stern, for the rudder was tillerless. As he came alongside the officers remarked that he appeared by his dress to be a man of more consideration than we would have expected to find in so humble a trading vessel, unless, indeed, he was a passenger in her. As soon as he gained the deck of the *Elphinstone* he asked for the "Captain sahib." The captain sahib soon made his appearance, and ordered one of the midshipmen standing by to direct the interpreter to attend. Hearing what was said in English the native stopped the messenger, informing the captain in the same tongue that it was unnecessary, as he had been in Bombay among English people and knew the language well. This was a little singular, and, as events turned out, was the indirect cause of his ruin, for had he not been able to speak English he would have been brought face to face with the interpreter, and in him would have recognised an individual who knew something of his previous history. As a devout Mohammedan he would say, "It was his nusseeb."

The native interpreter was below on the lower deck at the time, and as he was ascending the ladder a few minutes subsequent to the arrival of the Arab, he suddenly caught sight of the man's face. His step was arrested on the topmost round of the "companion," for well he remembered the lineaments of that countenance. It brought to his recollection the fearful scene some two years previously when his brother was murdered in cold blood before his eyes, and he himself escaped from a similar fate only by an accident amounting almost to a miracle. The interpreter immediately dived below the "coamings" of the

hatch, glad not to have been observed by his mortal foe. From this vantage-point he listened attentively to all that passed between the British officer and his visitor.

The latter, after a few preliminary observations, stated that he had received information regarding the shipping of some slaves in a retired part of the coast, and the truth of this information he had verified by personal observation. He went on to say that, if the captain wished, he would place him in possession of the exact locality of the embarkation; he knew, he added with a grin intended to denote the fact of his being "up to a thing or two," that English sailors loved prize-money, and as he had always entertained an affection for Feringhees, who had invariably treated him well, he was anxious to do them a good turn. As a guarantee of the genuineness of his statements, and of being what he gave out—a Bombay merchant,—he mentioned the names of all the commanders of the ships-of-war of the Hon. East India Company then on the Persian Gulf station, and was talking on with great volubility of his good faith, when Captain N—— interposed, expressing his entire confidence in him, and thanking him for his information, of which he intended to avail himself. So, after mutual expressions of esteem and good will, the native merchant took his departure to his buglah. No sooner was he over the ship's side and out of hearing than the captain turned on his heel, exclaiming,—

"That fellow is a scoundrel if ever there was one; it is written in every line of his black face."

The interpreter at the same moment stepped up to his superior, and, trembling all over, and with his countenance livid with rage and fear, told how the pseudo-merchant just gone was one of the most desperate and bloodthirsty

of the chiefs of the Jowassamee tribe, and his conviction that this whole thing was a planned ruse to entrap the *Elphinstone's* crew.

"That man, sir," he continued, "was the leader of the gang that seized the brig *Dolphin* and murdered all her crew, the account of which massacre so horrified the inhabitants of Western India some three years ago. Also, sir, that man, or fiend in man's shape, was the chief of the party that murdered my only brother in the manner I narrated to you last night. But," he added, "let him go, and you will then have an opportunity of capturing or destroying him and his whole crew, for the trap he has set for you will be his own undoing."

We were near the land at the time, and on looking over the side at the buglah it was seen that she was making for a point of the rugged coast-line. The Arab stranger had sufficient cunning to know that suspicion would be excited if he stood up the coast toward the spot he had pointed out as the point of embarkation of the slaves; he therefore made for the shore, intending, doubtless, to proceed by land and apprise his compatriots that the man-of-war captain had been duped, and to make preparations for his destruction.

The *Elphinstone* proceeded up the coast in the direction indicated, but owing to light baffling winds did not arrive at the trysting-place until the eighth day after the receipt of the intelligence. The small bay or bight to which they had been directed, was a place peculiarly adapted for the carrying out of the work of treachery that was supposed to be on hand. It was a lone spot, out of the track of all trading vessels. There were no forest trees or foliage of any kind, for the coast was desert and barren, without

even a blade of grass, but huge boulders and rocks lay all round the sides of the bay close to the water's edge ; it looked as if a party of Titans had been at play with them and had been disturbed in the middle of their game. The whole scene, indeed, was weird and wild to a degree. However, Captain N—— feared nothing ; with his gallant crew of 120 men, and on the deck of his tight little barque, mounting her 18 thirty-two pounders, ready, like trusty watch-dogs, to show their teeth to all intruders, he cared nought for pirates, though they came, " not singly but in battalions," only he must guard against his ship getting aground, as in that case he could neither manœuvre nor be certain of being able to use his battery with effect. The lead was, therefore, kept carefully going, and as soon as the shoal water warned him of danger the stream anchor was let go, and prepared so that it could be slipped if necessary, while the sails were merely "clued up."

True enough there lay, according to our information, four moderate-sized buglahs ; but there were no signs of activity on board them, no embarkation of slaves was going on, neither was there any landing of them to prevent their capture by us. Soon preparations were made to bring matters to a crisis : all the *Elphinstone's* boats were called away fully manned and armed for active service. Scarce had the reverberations of the hoarse voices of the boatswain and his mates, and the shrill whistle of their pipes, died away amid the echoing rocks of the little bay, than the decks of the sloop of war were a scene of animation and bustle as the boats' crews repaired to their stations with cutlasses girt by their sides and pistols in belt, while the muskets were stowed away in becketts under

the thwarts. Five boats were thus got ready, and in them were despatched 60 British tars and 5 officers, with instructions to carry the buglahs by boarding at all hazards. The first lieutenant went away in command, and well worthy he was to take charge of men sent on such a desperate errand. A man of gigantic strength, and of indomitable resolution commensurate with his muscular development, he was born to "threaten or command." The remainder of the crew, including all the ship's boys and non-combatants, such as cooks and a few natives, were stationed at the guns so as to open fire, if necessary, on any given point. Then Captain N—— took his station on the break of the poop and watched with keen interest the *dénouement*.

Had that stern old man had his will, far rather would he have been one of those taking an active part in the approaching *mêlée* than a spectator ; but naval etiquette does not allow of a commander leaving his ship under such circumstances.

The boats quickly pushed off and advanced in line abreast ; the sailors strained at their oars, and gave way to such purpose that soon they neared the silent black-looking hulls. Before they left the *Elphinstone* it was remarked that not a soul was visible on the decks of the buglahs, but now a great bustle was observable where all had been hitherto so quiet. There was intense excitement displayed on board all four vessels ; their decks were swarming with men, and the voices of the leaders were heard as they shouted out the word of command, or sought to inspire fighting ardour into the breasts of their followers. Happily the Jacks were prepared for hot work, and, so far from lessening their exertions at the oar, a cheer broke forth simultaneously from the brave fellows at sight

of the "niggers," as they contemptuously called them. Yet, truth to say, there was something startling, nay, even appalling, in the appearance of the savage pirates who had started up with the suddenness of an irruption of demons in a transpontine melodrama.

The four buglahs were lashed together, so that the only obstacle to free intercommunication lay in the bulwarks of each. As the boats made for the innermost of the vessels, the Arabs crowded into her to oppose their boarding. There were three or four pieces of cannon mounted on the upper deck of this craft; these were brass guns, and, on examination, it was subsequently found that they were of English manufacture. Fortunately for the attacking party, these cannon were not loaded, as the pirates did not expect them to operate in the manner adopted; and now the extreme overcrowding prevented their even being charged. In vain the gunners cursed and swore, and in despair strove with violence to "run in and load." There was no manner of discipline, as we understand the term; all were anxious to be foremost in repelling the enemy, who by their vigour and promptitude had stolen a march on them, and so the guns were not loaded until it was too late to use them with any effect.

Now the five boats struck the starboard or innermost side of the buglah, and in an instant the terrible struggle was begun. With desperate courage the enemy tried to beat into the sea the Jacks who, with equal fierceness, closed in mortal combat. The sailors seized the bodies of their swarthy foes when it was possible, and so tried to assist themselves in gaining the deck. The buglah was so heavily laden by the mass of fighting humanity in her, and moreover heeled over so considerably to starboard by

the additional weight of the boarders, that little or no actual scaling was required ; the great difficulty lay in finding a square inch into which to plant the foot. As the defenders in the front were killed or pushed over the side and into the water by the seething crowd in their rear, their place was supplied by fresh victims, and still the cry was "they come."

At this moment a happy thought struck one of the officers—a young mate who had just passed his examination for lieutenant, and who was in command of the second cutter. He had been repeatedly hurled back in his endeavours to board, and unexpectedly found that his boat had been pushed off, or had fallen away from the position she previously occupied. There were two other men in the boat with him, one of whom had been stunned by a blow, but now regained his senses.

The young officer ordered them to assist him in loading the boat's gun—a three-pounder—with grape shot. This was speedily done, and then he prepared to lay his boat on so that he might clear the gangway for the boarders with a "whiff" of this terrible projectile. Directing his two men to put an oar out on either side, he was thus enabled to lay the gun on, making the boat its platform. The difficulty was to get himself heard in the hubbub, and to do so before the enemy divined his purpose. He hit upon the expedient of calling out "Form lion's mouth !" an old manœuvre in which the men had been trained, and the object of which, when practised on board the *Elphinstone*, was to cause the broken ranks of the seamen, supposing them to have been surprised or driven back, to be rallied behind the two boat's guns always kept on the "break" of the poop, so that these guns might be brought

to bear on the temporary victors ; after their discharge, the men were taught to take advantage of the confusion the result in all probability of such a manoeuvre, and charge the broken ranks of the foe.

This may be thought a somewhat antiquated mode of repelling boarders, but it is nevertheless the fact that it was universally practised among the small sailing ships of the late Indian navy, and what is more, that its adoption has been attended with brilliant success on more than one occasion in which a Company's cruiser has been attacked by overpowering numbers in the old days when a desultory warfare was continually raging between the government ships and pirates, or refractory Arab chieftains in the Persian Gulf, and elsewhere.

"Form lion's mouth !" roared out the mate, and all hands, hearing the well-known order, never adopted except as a last resort, turned round, and at once divining what was "in the wind," dropped back into the boats, and laid under cover. Quick as thought, the boat was laid on to the thickest of the black mob, and, within a range of some ten yards, the cannon was discharged into the dense wall of humanity. The highly imaginative reader may perhaps conceive the fearful extent of the havoc the grape committed among the throng of desperadoes, but I cannot, with my pen, describe the horrors of the scene.

There was a general rush back from the vessel's side ; all sought to escape a second dose, and the result was that the deck was heaped up and rendered impassable with the dense writhing mass of dead and wounded and panic-stricken wretches. Every one was inspired solely by the instinct of self-preservation ; those who had the strength fought their way to the rear with the sole object of making

their escape, while those who were too severely injured to help themselves were mercilessly struck down and trodden upon by their more fortunate comrades. The actual fighting was over ; by a bold conception, well carried out at the critical moment, the young officer had won the day. With a cheer, the Englishmen followed up the advantage gained in so singular a manner, and in an instant a dozen of them were standing on the blood-stained deck of the pirate, and pressing closely on the beaten enemy. These were so thoroughly demoralized that few among them attempted resistance. They jumped overboard in crowds, and made for the shore, while the Arabs manning the other buglahs imitated the cowardly example of their countrymen, and sought safety in a precipitate flight.

Now, also, was brought to light the deadly danger that awaited the sailors, had they been foiled ; for, from behind all the huge rocks skirting the small cove, and within a few yards of which the boats had so confidently passed only a few minutes before, started up, fully armed, dozens, I might almost say hundreds, of the enemy.

One was irresistibly reminded of Scott's spirited lines, when describing the combat between Rhoderick Dhu and Fitzjames :—

“ Instant through copse and heath are seen
Bonnets and spears, and bended bows !
On right and left, above, below,
Sprang up at once the lurking foe ;
From shingles grey their lances start,
The bracken-bush sends forth the dart ;
The rushes and the willow wand,
Are bristling into axe and brand ;
And every tuft of broom gives life
To plaided warriors armed for strife.”

The game was up, and there was no further occasion

for concealment. The assumption under which all these preparations had been made was the following, as we afterwards learned. The trap that was to catch the hare was somewhat cunningly laid and baited.

It was thought that the captain of the man-of-war would send, in all probability, one boat to take possession of the supposed slaver; of course the crew, who would be unarmed, as opposition by slavers was very rarely offered to an English ship-of-war, would be all put to death the moment they set foot on the deck of the nearest buglah. They then proposed hoisting the British ensign. After a short time had elapsed it was concluded that one or two more boats would be despatched from the *Elphinstone*, also unarmed; for any suspicion of treachery the captain might otherwise entertain, it was thought would be disarmed by the fact that the ensign was flying. These boats' crews were to meet the same fate as their shipmates, and then the sloop of war, weakened by the absence of three boats' crews, would easily fall into their clutches; they proposed either to carry her by boarding or to adopt whatever plan circumstances might develop as the most practicable.

Fortunately they had a wary old bird to deal with—one who knew, from the experience of a lifetime, their proclivities for cunning and treachery. As soon as the men-of-war's men had gained possession of the four native vessels, the first lieutenant decided on burning them where they lay; it was impossible to haul them off into deep water, and they were, moreover, of no value. Search was made for any person that might be concealed in their holds, and then the torch was applied to them. Those among the pirates who were desperately wounded, were taken to

the *Elphinstone*, but the native who had sought to inveigle the British to their destruction could nowhere be found. It was known that he had been desperately wounded by the discharge of grape-shot, but he had been carried away. It was subsequently learned that he died of the wounds he then received.

The boats returned to the *Elphinstone*, and the next day she sailed for Bushire. The British loss, I may state, was not severe: one man died of a thrust from a creese, and of the ten seamen who were wounded, all recovered, though some of the number bore their scars to their graves.





A RUSSIAN LEGEND.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNDETECTED CRIME.

TO those who have voyaged over distant climes, whether by land or sea, or to such as have devoted themselves in the quiet of their studies to works of travel, it has doubtless occurred as a singular circumstance that natives inhabiting countries which have had no communication one with another possess, in common, certain superstitions. I do not now speak of the "touch of nature" which the great poet says, "makes the whole world kin," but more of that legendary lore which, like the "sagas" of our Scandinavian forefathers, forms an unwritten literature, if I may so define it,—a fact which assuredly proves the affinity existing between the different members of the vast family of the human race. Wide apart as the poles though sections of mankind may be, there is this invisible chain of sympathy, which, like the thin wire now throbbing at the bottom of the stormy Atlantic with messages of peace and goodwill between the two great divisions of the Anglo-Saxon race,

binds all nationalities together and testifies to our common origin.

Among these superstitions is that of the "were-wolf," which used to prevail in the Germany of the middle ages, or the "loup-garou" of France, as the creature, which was supposed to be a sorcerer in the form of a wolf, was called. It is a fact that a man was actually publicly executed in the Low Countries, towards the end of the sixteenth century, for the imputed crime of being able to change himself at will into a "were-wolf," so that this belief was not entirely confined to the ignorant.

Having obtained three years' sick leave from India, where I was so unfortunate as to suffer from that Anglo-Indian malady called by the faculty "hepatitis," I so far recovered my health during the second year of my return home, that I determined to try what a few months' travel in Russia, with such shooting as I could manage to obtain, would do to set me up. A winter among the eternal snows of the north of Russia, the reader will allow, was a decided change from the stifling heat of the plains of Central India. However, as my liver had attained the relative dimensions of that of the unlucky feathered biped whose destiny it is to gratify the palates of gourmands when the organ in question is dished up in the tempting form of "pâté de foie gras," I resolved to see if there was any virtue in the nipping blasts of the White Sea to reduce the abnormal condition of the said organ to proportions more consonant with a state of health. Accordingly I set sail for "Holy" Russia, and, after a short stay at St. Petersburg, proceeded to the province of Archangel, in the north, and plunged into the thick, dark forests of fir and larch with which the summits of

the mountains are crowned, and which clothe the slopes of the "everlasting hills" with an evergreen mantle. There are to be found the bear and the wolf, and it was chiefly with the object of shooting some of these animals that I left the busy haunts of men and buried myself in the deep woods without any companionship.

When I say, however, *without* any companionship, I am not speaking quite correctly, for I had engaged the services of what we should call in India a "shikarri," that is, a huntsman who knows the neighbourhood well, and who can take you to the points most frequented by the game of which you are in pursuit. Now, my friend the "shikarri" was a strange, reserved sort of fellow; at times, indeed, his moodiness would deepen into moroseness, and on such occasions his company was anything but desirable. I was often on the point of parting with him; but he was an admirable huntsman, and, when not seized with his fits of gloom, his conversation, though not entertaining (for I cannot recall his ever having smiled in my presence), was often very instructive. He knew everything relating to the habits of the game of those regions, whether feathered or four-footed, and told me many curious anecdotes regarding them.

One day we were out shooting, and suddenly came upon a wolf, which I shot dead at the first discharge. We ran up to the brute and examined it, and found it to be a large and very fierce-looking specimen of the quadruped. As we lifted its head we saw the death agony contorting its features and imparting to their sharp outline a peculiar look of undying malignity. In a moment or two, and after fixing its eyes, now glazing in death, on my comrade, as if it mistook him for its

slayer, the beast, with a struggle, expired at our feet. When my companion looked more closely at the animal, I remarked that he trembled and appeared ill at ease. After regarding the face of the wolf for a minute with an expression of fear on his stolid and impassive features, he drew back and was retiring, when, moved with curiosity at such an unaccountable exhibition from a man possessing the strong nerves which Imhoff had displayed on different occasions, I asked what had alarmed him. Pointing to the prostrate form of the wolf, he exclaimed, in an agitated voice, "Did you not see the marked way in which it looked at me when it was dying?"

"Well," I said, laughing, "and what of that? Did it know you? At all events, it is dead now, and cannot harm you."

The fellow looked angrily at me, while his face flushed crimson as he marked my tone of derision.

"Yes," he said, "but have you not marked his face? Look at it now. It is not the face of a wolf. Don't you see the lineaments of a man in every feature? Can't you recognise, too, the human expression in the lines about the mouth and eyes?"

I looked more closely at the wolf, and, true enough, there dawned upon my mind the resemblance not only to the features, but to the very expression of a man in the countenance of the dead brute: it was like, strangely, fearfully like, the visage of a wicked, bad man.

I have seen such a face, allowing for the exaggeration of the long wolfish profile, among the busy assemblages of men in this city of London—the face of the man who has long ground down poor suitors or clients with exactions for payment to the uttermost farthing, and who

has grown fat on the proceeds of his ill-gotten wealth. I have seen, too, such an expression on the face of a man whom I can recall to mind, whose heart was as hard as adamant against the prayer of the houseless beggar he met in the almost deserted street on a bitter cold night during Christmas, when a warm fireside and every comfort awaited him at his own hearth—a man who told you, with an unctuous satisfaction, that he prided himself on turning a deaf ear to the starving wretch who prayed him, for the great God's sake, to buy him a morsel of bread from the baker's shop, before the brilliant gaslight of which, as it flared out into the street, the meeting took place. "No, sir," says the gentleman with the wolfish countenance and adamantine heart, buttoning up his coat: "we pay heavy poor-rates enough: go to the parish. I make it a practice, on principle" (Heaven save the mark!) "never to give a halfpenny in the streets." He turns away, and on the morrow, in the grey light of the morning, as the cold east wind sweeps round the street corners, and seems to search the very marrow in the bones of Constable X 41, as that intelligent officer comes to relieve his shivering comrade at his post, a figure is seen crouching on a low door-step rolled up into a shape that one would think no human being could attain. The policeman pushes the miserable bundle of rags, which contains an immortal soul (as the preachers take care to inform us every Sunday morning from the pulpit), and the bundle of rags rolls over on one side, but does not move. The policeman leans down, and discovers that the object of his solicitude is dead. It is the houseless boy who overnight had prayed the well-fed gentleman, for his Maker's sake, to have pity on him and

give him a morsel of bread. The face of the wolf I had just shot bore a singular resemblance to the countenance of the man of whom the above incident is told, and it involuntarily recurred to me now, as I pushed the carcass over, and left it to rot in the leafy wilderness.

When we reached the small hut which formed our head-quarters, I determined to interrogate my companion as to the cause of the strange exhibition of fear he had displayed. We were sitting, after our meal, over the wood fire; the evening had gradually given way to night; the wind howled outside our crazy little hut in a mournful manner, and the cold, borne in upon us as the night air whistled through the chinks of the wooden walls of the shooting-box, induced us to cower over the fire, and heap on the logs to make the scene within look as bright and cheerful as might be. My comrade, usually silent, seemed plunged in one of his fits of gloom. Presently he shuddered, and looked over his shoulder in a fearful manner. Without seeming to take notice of this, I asked him to replenish his glass. Imhoff did not require pressing, for it was not often I offered him a dram from the few bottles of first-class Cognac I had brought with me from Paris, and I knew that he had an especial liking for the fiery stimulant, which he had never enjoyed an opportunity of tasting before engaging himself as my servant. After somewhat recovering himself, he broke silence of his own accord, and said, in an elevated tone of voice, after the manner of a man who wishes by loud talking to dispel a feeling of fear he, in vain, seeks to shake off, "If you wish, sir, I will tell you a tale. It is true, and may interest you." Then, without waiting for an answer, Imhoff commenced as follows:—

"You seemed surprised when I remarked to you the strong resemblance that dead wolf bore—in his face, I mean—to a man ; but perhaps you are not aware of a belief—'superstition' you English people may call it—that exists among the peasantry in some parts of Russia. Where I come from—that is, the Ural mountains—there is a belief that a man who has murdered either of his parents assumes involuntarily the form of a wolf once every year, and that this transmigration takes place on the day and hour when the foul deed was committed ; and, moreover, it is believed that, no matter how distant he may be from the scene of his crime, he is impelled by irresistible promptings to return and revisit the exact spot on which the blood of his victim was shed. Now, in the village where I was born there lived a man of the name of Gotzloff : he was single, about thirty years of age, and resided with his parents—two old people. Gotzloff was a '*mauvais sujet*'—what you call a 'ne'er do well.' He was a sullen, lazy fellow, consorting with no one, and not even associating with his parents more than was necessary while taking his daily meals. Sometimes he used to absent himself from his home for whole days, but the village folk did not trouble themselves about his unaccountable absences, for he was sure to turn up again. It was reported among the neighbours that he frequently quarrelled with the old people at home, and passers by the house in which they lived asserted that the sound of blows, accompanied with cries, was heard issuing from the cottage, which was situated somewhat apart from the rest of the village.

"Bad as Gotzloff was, and incapable as he seemed of the higher passions, yet he had fallen desperately in love

with a young woman of the village. This attachment was regarded with repugnance by all her friends, but to no one was the idea more hateful than to the girl who had inspired the passion. The mingled terror and aversion with which she regarded her ill-favoured lover were something extraordinary. She never would suffer herself to be left alone, such a dread had she of encountering Gotzloff. Once when he called to see his enslaver at the cottage where she resided, and found her sitting by herself in the chief room, to which he had gained an entrance by merely knocking and walking in, as is the custom in that part of Russia, she screamed with nervous terror, and on encountering his large sinister-looking black eyes fixed upon hers with a fierce look intended to denote ardent admiration, swooned quite away. Her brother fortunately entered at that moment, but she was some time before she recovered herself sufficiently to speak. Gotzloff, with his wonted obstinacy, would not take a refusal, but followed the wretched girl about like her shadow, and managed to intrude his presence on her at times when she least expected it. Her brother had promised the pertinacious lover a sound thrashing, but Gotzloff managed, nevertheless, to keep a whole skin, for the truth was, he was a very powerful man, and few cared to measure their strength with his. At length one day, when he had forced his presence upon her as she sat alone spinning in her house, the young maiden, to get rid of his importunities, was so ungarded as to accede to a promise he demanded at her hands. The poor girl, indeed, was in such a state of alarm that she would have promised almost anything to release herself from his hated presence, and as she afterwards thought of the

single condition or stipulation which must be satisfied ere the fulfilment of the promised request could be insisted upon, she felt somewhat more easy in her mind——”

“And what was the promise she made?” said I, breaking in, for his narrative interested me.

“Sir,” said he, leaning forward and lowering his voice, as if afraid that the words might be heard by some listener, though we were alone, and no sounds broke the stillness within that cheerless hut, save the monotonous ebb and flow of his tones as he spoke, now in a half-whisper, now in an elevated voice, and the loud wailing of the night wind without, as it swept through the roughly-hewn logs forming the walls of the shooting-box, —“Sir, it was a solemn vow she had registered, for it was more in the nature of a vow than a promise, as he had insisted on her taking the most fearful of oaths to bind herself to fulfil her share of the agreement in the event of his first doing the same. She swore that if he became possessed of a sum of money (3,000 silver roubles, equal to about £500 English money) she would become his bride. There was no other condition attached to the obtaining of her hand in marriage—not even that the money should be come by honestly, or that the mode in which it was acquired should be openly made known. He was to show her £500 as his own property, and she was to yield her person to him as his wedded wife. ‘But,’ she reasoned with herself, ‘how could such an indolent, clownish fellow accumulate so large an amount of money?’ for to a Russian peasant £500 was a vast sum, and the impossibility of the condition ever being fulfilled reassured her mind, until again the thought of the terrible oath she had taken frightened her afresh,

and she was fain to pray Heaven for pardon for her blasphemous disregard of the most sacred obligations.

"Joy filled the wicked heart of the peasant as he left his terror-stricken victim, whom he already possessed in fancy. Now, he felt, he only cared to live to claim her as his own. To look at this dull-featured, sinister-looking man, you would have thought that nothing so ennobling as the passion of love had any part in his composition. Thoroughly bad as was his nature, he yet possessed this one redeeming trait of character, and loved the pretty timid village lass with his whole soul.

"Every one avoided Gotzloff, with, indeed, one notable exception; and the friendship with this individual only dated but a very short time before the occurrence of the incident which I am about to relate. The person honoured with the partiality of the wicked hero of this tale was a man of a repute not less evil than himself. He was said to be a retired attorney, who had practised in Moscow with some benefit to his pecuniary resources, but with great loss to the reputation with which every young man should commence life. This limb of the law, it was reported, had only lately returned from a lengthened visit (at Government expense) to the extensive mines in Siberia. He had been deported thither, so rumour said (and in this instance 'rumour' could not be characterised as 'lying'), for forging the will of one of his clients, whose executor he had made himself out to be. The returned convict thought his crime and identity would be unknown in this out-of-the-way place, but he soon found out his mistake, and with bitter rage became aware of the fact that, notwithstanding his superior education and refinement, the honest

folk forming the humble society of this remote hamlet would hold no communication with him. At length he noted the man Gotzloff, and, for reasons which I shall presently unfold, resolved to cultivate his acquaintance.

“The greed for gold formed the chief incentive to all the actions which had brought disgrace on the attorney : for gold he would do anything. It was reported in the village that the parents of Gotzloff were possessed of considerable wealth ; the old man had kept the chief village store, and retailed almost everything that was considered of a luxurious character to the minds of the villagers, even to the extent of dealing in fine Chinese teas. He had, a short time before the action of my story commences, sold his business ; and what with the large sum he had realized for it, and what with the savings of a long and thrifty life (for the old couple had been always remarkable for penuriousness), it was thought that the worthy man would certainly leave a large sum behind him at his death. From the day the disgraced attorney took to his confidence the ne’er-do-weel Gotzloff, every one boded no good to the future of that misguided peasant. He became moodier than ever, and passed whole nights in the society of his new friend. Shut up together in the rambling old house which the latter had bought, the well-matched pair were rarely met apart ; and at such times Gotzloff, when encountered by a villager, was always seen in a state of high excitement quite different from the impassive stolid manners he had hitherto been remarkable for. He would be found talking to himself, gesticulating in a violent manner as if holding converse with some person, while his eyes gleamed with a wildness that seemed to indicate a state

of madness. The house of M. Le Fanu, the lawyer, for he was a Frenchman by descent, though Russian by birth and education, was situated not far from the outskirts of the village, and was a tumble-down place that had not been occupied for many years : it bore in fact, like its present owner, an ill-repute, for it was said to be haunted.

“ This was in no way a drawback to its occupation by him, far from it ; happy at the opportunity of being able to drive a hard bargain, for the former owner was glad enough to get rid of the ill-omened place, he purchased it outright for a very small sum. A moat, once filled with water, but long since dry, and choked up with rank vegetation, surrounded the house ; and excepting the large heavy door studded with nails, which was never used, the only means of communication with the interior lay through a small wicket-gate. It was such a place as the poet speaks of in that wonderfully descriptive piece of word-painting :—

“ ‘ With blackest moss the flower-pots
Were thickly crusted, one and all ;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peach to the garden wall ;
The broken sheds looked sad and strange,
Uplifted was the clinking latch,
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.’

“ The villagers, if they passed the dreary mansion at night-time, shuddered as they marked the solitary light in one of the rooms over the gateway, and marked the figures, now of one, and again of the other, of the inmates, as they flitted backwards and forwards between the window and

the lamp. The attorney was never now seen except in the company of Gotzloff, whom he followed like an evil genius. It was afterwards related by a woodcutter that, as he was returning home one night from his daily toil, he had occasion to pass by the little cottage where resided the old couple with their graceless son. It was a dark night, and he had some difficulty in picking his way over the broken ground and stumps of trees. Pushing through the forest, he unexpectedly came upon the open space in which stood the cottage where Gotzloff lived. He was preparing to turn more to the left, as the road to his own house lay in that direction, when he espied a dark form leaning against the shutters which protected the window of the room on the ground-floor. He stood still to watch the action of the intruder, who at so late an hour of the night was peering through the shutters of the lonely house. It was doubtless for no good purpose that any man was thus employed, and he might be instrumental, he thought, in preventing the commission of a foul deed of robbery and murder. He quietly waited a minute, when the dark form moved from the window, and he heard a low 'hist!' as the man called to some one to approach. Another person, whom he did not recognize, but whose gait seemed familiar to him, now issued from the trees at the other extremity of the space, and joined the listener, and then the couple leaned stealthily down, and peered through a chink in the shutter into the interior of the dwelling. After a few moments they moved on one side, and engaged in eager, but whispered, conversation; then the first-mentioned individual raised his hand and shook his fist in a menacing manner towards the house, and the two quickly made

off. They passed, in close colloquy, within a few feet of the woodcutter, who saw with astonishment that they were no other than Gotzloff and his evil friend Le Fanu. As they brushed past him he heard the peasant say, in an agitated voice, 'Ah! but the fate of the wolf;' to which the other replied, with a scornful laugh, 'I thought I had knocked all such foolish nonsense out of your head. Think of the girl.' And the rest was lost in the distance, as they passed beyond earshot.

"The woodcutter stepped up and peeped through the chink in the old half-worn-out shutter, and there a strange sight presented itself. The old couple were seated at a table with a solitary oil lamp between them, and, heaped up in a tall, broad-based, and glittering pile before them, was a perfect pyramid of gold; enough there was of the 'root of all evil' to have gladdened the heart of any miser, and, to judge by the looks of the aged people as they gazed with rapture into the heap, and dipped and rolled their hands into and through the slippery coin, its contemplation afforded them infinite satisfaction.

"Pondering much on what he had heard, the worthy serf went on his way, opining that no good could come when two such birds of ill-omen consorted together. He was drafted into the army a few days after thus being an involuntary listener to the above conversation, and did not return for some years to his native village.

"Within a month of that night a fearful event happened in the quiet little hamlet nestling at the foot of the gigantic Ural Mountains.

"Gotzloff's elder brother, I must state, had set up as the village blacksmith, and was well known and much

respected by every one for his probity and industry, and was, indeed, in every respect the reverse of his graceless relative. One winter's evening Gotzloff burst into his house, and with a flurried manner and in terrified accents told how his parents had been absent all day, but had not yet returned, and, as they never stayed away from home after dusk, he was desirous to know of their welfare. He thought they might have walked over to their son's house, and, being very anxious, he had come to see if all was well. The brother replied, with astonishment, that he had not seen them that day, and he was certain they would soon return ; however, he would go back with Gotzloff, and they would institute a search after the old people ; and a search was instituted, but all in vain. No one had seen them ; and, on Gotzloff being interrogated, he solemnly asseverated that he knew nothing of where they were gone, as he had been out trapping foxes the previous evening ; that he had slept at M. Le Fanu's house, and, on his return home, had found the breakfast things laid for the morning meal, clearly showing, he said, his parents had passed the night in their house ; but there was no sign of them. The villagers all came flocking to the solitary cottage, and many of the neighbours offered their services. The woods were scoured far and near, but without success ; no trace could be found of the missing couple. M. Le Fanu now came from his solitary château upon the scene, and, after inquiring in an anxious manner what all this disturbance meant—for the people were hurrying about with torches—most obligingly offered his assistance. The search had now been continued during the whole night, but still without result. When morning broke, cold and

clear, the villagers did not relax their efforts, but, joining themselves into parties, spread for miles over the surrounding country, beating up every brake and bush large enough to conceal a human being. If they were above ground they would be found, and found at length they—or, rather, their dead bodies—were. In a thicket about half a mile from the cottage where they had resided, a group of searchers stumbled over them, their attention being attracted to the spot by some dogs, which set up a howl in chorus on scenting the senseless corpses of the unfortunate pair. There, cold and rigid in death, lay the old man and his aged wife, both indubitably, foully, and cruelly murdered. No doubt could exist about the deed, and as group after group of the peasants came up and witnessed the shocking spectacle they presented, there was but one opinion expressed. The heads of both the deceased were fearfully cut about, to all appearance by the blows of a common hatchet, such as is generally used for chopping wood. The blows were on the back of the head, and had, without doubt, been delivered from behind. A murder of so cruel a character, and committed on the persons of such harmless victims, had never been known by the oldest inhabitant of the village to have been committed in that country-side.

“Exclamations of horror arose from the crowd at the discovery, and every man, with clenched teeth, vowed to discover the perpetrator or perpetrators of the foul deed. Gotzloff’s elder brother, on first seeing the mangled bodies of his parents, was struck dumb with grief and dismay, and then was seized with a succession of epileptic fits, from the effects of which he had not strength to rally. Brain fever set in in a few days,

during the continuance of which the wretched young man raved of the fearful scene which seemed to be ever present to his frenzied imagination, until, succumbing at length to the disease, he followed his parents to their bloody grave, mourned by all his neighbours. As to the other son—I speak of Gotzloff—when he was brought up to the spot where had been enacted this tragedy, his hitherto careless bearing forsook him: in spite of strenuous efforts to appear unconcerned, his whole manner betokened violent agitation. He refused to look upon the dead bodies of his parents: his face became ashy pale, while every muscle in his body shook with a nervous tremor. His comportment excited observation among one or two of the spectators, but nothing was said, as the majority put his emotion down to extreme grief. Investigation into the circumstances of the murder, and a diligent search for the murderer, were alike fruitless; the author, or authors of the crime, had laid their schemes so well that not a clue could be obtained towards the clearing up of the mystery, and it seemed as if the fearful event was to remain for ever a secret, and, like too many such deeds of violence, was to be numbered among the undetected crimes which would be only unveiled at the last day, before the tribunal where every thought and action shall be rendered clear as noon-day."

CHAPTER II.

THE MURDERER'S DOOM IS FULFILLED.

"No person was more anxious to clear Gotzloff from all complicity in the murder than M. Le Fanu. He never wearied of stating how he had been with him during the night of the occurrence, and minutely described in what manner every hour of the twelve had been employed. It was evident that the unhappy couple had not been put to death while resisting an act of robbery, for their persons were not even rifled of some little money which was found in the pockets of the old man. Another singular circumstance was, that the weapon with which the crime had been committed, could not be found, and that notwithstanding the most diligent search. After the funeral had been decently performed, and the bodies interred amidst the sorrowing sympathies of the entire village for their hapless fate, some curiosity was evinced as to the disposition and amount of the property left behind by the murdered man. His thrifty, penurious habits were well known, and expectation was on tiptoe regarding the number of silver roubles of which their late townsman had died possessed. First as to the will; search was made for it everywhere in the little cottage, for it was generally decided that he must have left some document regulating the disposition of his property. At length the will was found; but picture to yourself the amazement of the assembled auditory, when the notary-public read aloud the instrument, and it was found that every kopeck had been left to Gotzloff for his entire and exclusive benefit. The last testament of the deceased spoke

of three thousand five hundred silver roubles as the amount of his personalty (for he, miser-like, had nothing in the shape of what lawyers call 'real' property, as he always kept his money hoarded up), and then recounted in set phraseology how he willed it all to his beloved son Gotzloff! Every man in the room held up his hands in amazement, and more than one person declared it was impossible that he should have cut off his elder son and his family from all participation in the inheritance. Yet so it was; and there was no gainsaying the document. As witnesses to the deed there appeared the signatures of the deceased woman his wife, and of M. Le Fanu; and, as some among the more incredulous reluctantly testified, there could be no doubt that all the signatures, including that of the testator, were perfectly genuine. Every one knew the handwriting of the worthy old man, for he had given receipts for money, time out of mind, to half the villagers who dealt at his store, and there could be no reasonable doubt of its being what it purported; and yet for all this not a man in the room but shook his head and looked perplexed. It was monstrous, and against all the dictates of human nature, that for no reason the affectionate son who was then dying of grief and horror at the spectacle presented by his murdered father's corpse, should thus be cut off without a rouble; and the more so as he was much beloved, and deservedly also, by his parents while living. However, '*litera scripta manet*,' and the sagacious folk were fain to content themselves with shaking their heads and confessing that it passed their comprehension. M. Le Fanu, with wonderful particularity, described the incidents connected with the making of the will, and spoke with tears of sympathy of his re-

gret at the shocking fate of the parents of his friend. Respecting the provisions of the will, however, he said he was not astonished, for the old people (whose confidence he stated, to the surprise of his listeners, he was so happy as to have gained) always led him to believe that the younger son Gotzloff was the favourite, and that to him they purposed leaving all their worldly goods."

"It would be impossible, were I to attempt the task, to describe the state of mind into which the fair young creature, who was so unfortunate as to have gained the love of Gotzloff, was thrown upon receiving the intelligence that he had come into the possession of no less than 3,500 silver roubles, being 500 more than the sum stipulated as sufficient to gain her hand. On the fact being carelessly mentioned to her as part of the eagerly-sought village gossip connected with the recent event, the wretched girl was overcome with a sensation of faintness; had the announcement of her immediate execution been made to her, it could not have affected her in a greater degree. She shivered as if the icy hand of death was laid upon her fair head, for the thought of the fearful promise she had given, and the terrible oath with which she had registered it, rose to her recollection like a phantom; it haunted her night and day, and in vain she strove to shake off the reflections suggested by its recurrence. She must either wed the man she abhorred more than anything in this world, or else her oath would drag her soul down to that hell she had so carelessly invoked, and 'fiends would snatch at it.'

"This girl was a creature of a highly nervous, sensitive organization, and therefore my readers must not sneer at

her as a fool. I have known and do know some of my own fair countrywomen who, were they brought up in such an atmosphere of superstition as that in which she existed, would have been racked with the same feelings of fear, and with horrors of remorse not less acute. It was in an unguarded moment of terror that, to get rid of his odious presence, and indeed scarce knowing what she did, she had allowed the blasphemous words of the vow to escape from her lips. How bitterly she deplored it now ! Alas ! had she for one moment weighed the possibility of the fulfilment of the one condition she had exacted, the fatal words would never have passed her lips. But now it was too late ; no one, she argued with herself, had any idea that Gotzloff's father had accumulated such a large sum of money, and still less that he would have left it wholly to his younger son, with whom it had been reported he could never agree.

"The day after the funeral of his murdered parents, Gotzloff called to see 'Annette,' and, first desiring her to grant him an interview in private, with which request she meekly complied, he showed her the will, and abruptly demanded her hand in marriage. It was in vain that she prayed him to forego his claim, to give her only a little respite. He was obdurate. With a cruel cunning you would not have given him credit for, he saw his advantage ; *she admitted his claim on her person.* He spoke of the terms of the oath she had so lightly taken, and hinted darkly at some alternative of revenge. The hapless girl was as a bird under the gaze of a snake. She could scarcely articulate, and was so overcome with extreme terror that she sat still, and could only murmur to herself a prayer that God would help her. At length,

with an effort, she summoned up sufficient strength and resolution to ask for a day or two to think over her past happy life, and then, to rid herself of his presence—for she felt that were he to stay much longer in her society she would expire for very terror, the dismayed Annette, scarce knowing what she did, promised to wed him. With a smile of satisfaction lighting up his repulsive features, the brutal Gotzloff rose to take his departure. It would have moved the heart of a demon to have seen the expression of abject fear that was impressed in every feature of the girl's pale face, as she watched him with eyes open wide with a ghastly look of horror, while he took her hand and bade her adieu, as he said, repeating her words, only for a day or two, until he should lead her to the altar. He was gone; the shadow of death, which seemed to brood over her like the wings of the fabled vampire when they wave over the victim whose life-blood it is slowly drinking, seemed for the time to have been removed, and then the timid superstitious maiden lost all consciousness in a dead faint."

"And why did she not call her brother and other male relations to her aid?" I exclaimed, on hearing this fearful story. "Surely they had sufficient manliness among them to protect her from so hated a lover."

"No," said Imhoff, "she was so spell-bound with her superstitious dread of this man that she was as unresisting as a lamb going to the slaughter. She had been left an orphan early in life, and had only one brother, and him she dared not inform of her state of mind, but led him to believe,—when he questioned her, after Gotzloff had informed him of his approaching marriage with his sister,—that she would not be an unwill-

ling bride. Her brother, knowing her former detestation of Gotzloff, concluded that she was actuated by a love of lucre, and himself not callous to the attractions of gold, held his peace, won over by the promise of a sum of money on the completion of the ceremony. It seemed then as if the ill-fated girl was to be sacrificed to the monster she detested ; but it was not to be. Naturally of delicate health, the fragile creature broke down under the pressure of the calamity impending over her, which she had not sufficient strength of mind to encounter in the manner any woman of resolution would have decided upon doing,—namely, by boldly refusing to carry out the promise she had been weak enough in an unguarded moment to give, and then by praying to Heaven for forgiveness in that she had been wicked enough to bind herself by the most solemn vows, and by the invocation of names the most sacred. But, wrapt up as she was in a mantle of superstitious terror, she could think of no plan to release herself from her hated promise, and could only dwell with unutterable dismay on the prospect of being his constant companion and associate, inseparable, alas ! till death had placed a barrier between them. How she longed for the approach of the ‘King of Terrors !’ To her bewildered mind his advent would now bring no terror ; she regarded him rather in the light of the saviour who could alone preserve her from her abhorred lover. Day and night she prayed, with a fervid sincerity she could not have thought even possible only a short week before, for her release before the dreaded day, now fast approaching, when she must stand by his side at the hymeneal altar. To her the embrace of what Romeo called in his anguish (as he leant over

his beloved Juliet) 'the lean, abhorred monster,' was the one, the only thing to be desired. How infinitely preferable was death to the detested clasp of the brutal clown whom she regarded with such utter aversion that the very thought of his love drove her to the brink of madness ! This could not last. She ate nothing, she slept not at all. The one idea that occupied her brain, to the exclusion of all else, was her approaching nuptials,—the one form that seemed ever present to her mind's eyes was the heavy ponderous figure of that man whom the unfortunate girl believed, from the bottom of her heart, had slain his parents. Her suspense was not to last long ; the only true friend she had left, and whose aid she had, in her wild despair, invoked,—the friend whom we, in our short-sighted love for things of this world, regard as our bitterest foe, and call 'the last enemy,'—who, when all else desert us, brings us relief,—this friend looked down with pity upon the broken hearted and erring maiden, and, stretching forth his cold, icy hand, released with gentleness the silver cord which bound to earth the fragile bowl of morality.

Thus gently died, as she had lived, this young peasant, who had more of the saint about her than half of the impostors whose names are inscribed in the Roman calendar. She committed a sin, and grievously and bitterly she paid for it.

“ May no wolfe howl ; no screech owle stir
A wing about thy sepulchre !
No boysterous winds or stormes come hither,
To starve or wither
Thy soft sweet earth ! but, like a spring,
Love keep it ever flourishing.”

"To this day," said Imhoff, raising himself after a few

moments' silence during which he had bent his heavy eyes on the embers of the wood fire,—“to this day she is regarded as a saint by the humble people in that remote village, and her memory is venerated and beloved as much as that of her evil lover is execrated, and held in deepest opprobrium.

“But I am anticipating somewhat. Gotzloff raved with passion when he was informed of the untimely fate of the girl he had loved with all the depth of which his brutish nature was capable; but her death roused no tender feelings in his nature, it struck no chord of remorse or regret at what he had wrought: on the contrary, it seemed to bring out into stronger relief the black traits in his character; like Pharaoh of old in the awful Scripture story, ‘he hardened his heart,’ and, on learning the news, swore fearfully at having been baulked of his anticipated prey. ‘Was it for this,’ he observed to M. Le Fanu, with a fierceness the more polished Frenchman strove in vain to allay, ‘that I have committed crimes for which there can be no pardon either in this world or in the next?’

“I cannot say with truth that Gotzloff at this moment of defeat and disappointment felt one atom of real remorse for the commission of the crime of which he spoke in such despairing words; he did feel, however, that had he known that not even the fortune of 3,000 roubles would bring to his arms the girl for whom he had dared so much, the deed, which he repented him he had committed, would have remained undone. As he exclaimed to his evil counsellor and familiar, Le Fanu, ‘It was to gain her I did the terrible deed, not to put half the spoil into your knavish fingers.’

"Le Fanu smiled, for he cared nothing for abuse, and had little fear but that the instinct of self-preservation would induce his tool to keep his counsel and forbear from making a confidant of any one else. 'But,' reasoned this wily lawyer, 'I must keep him quiet and in good humour. He might have what foolish, weak-minded people call a conscience. It would never do were he to ruin all by confessing his guilt, like some fools I have known. Rather than that should come about, I would have to adopt measures, infallible measures, to keep his tongue silent for ever.' So, to bring Gotzloff into good humour, M. Le Fanu induced him to turn his attention to shooting bears, which abound in those mountains, and which he judged rightly would satisfy in a measure that craving for dangerous excitement which generally animates men whose minds are ill at ease. .

"Well, some months passed, and nothing more came to light by which the murder could be traced. Gotzloff and M. Le Fanu kept now entirely to themselves, for no one in truth cared to consort with them. At length the anniversary of the tragic event came round. The attorney and his friend, about a week before the dawn of the fatal day, absented themselves from the village; the former gave out that they were going on a shooting excursion.

"On their reappearance it was noticed that Gotzloff looked worn and restless. If possible, his morose features had assumed an aspect indicating incipient insanity; he appeared as if suspicious of everything and everybody. After about a month, however, he seemed to settle down more into his ordinary tone of mind, which, though at the best of times the reverse of amiable, was yet not characterised by the savage reserve that had prompted him,

for the few days immediately succeeding his return from his hunting tour, to shun the very sight of a human being.

“Again the second anniversary of the murder of the old couple drew near, and again it was remarked that Gotzloff left his house and went away, as he gave out, to enjoy sport with his gun. On his return he appeared in the same morose temper as before, and his appearance, as on the first occasion of his absence, was that of a man haggard and worn to a degree. So year rolled by after year, and never once did Gotzloff remain in his native village and pass the sad anniversary of his parents’ death at home. It was ever the same. Some excuse was always found, and spread about assiduously by his confidant, M. Le Fanu, as to the reason which necessitated his friend’s absence from the neighbourhood of the spot where the crime was committed on that memorable winter’s night. M. Le Fanu himself never failed to accompany Gotzloff on these occasions. At length so marked became the recurrence of their journeys, always undertaken at the same date, and so singular was the appearance of the wicked hero of this story on his return, that rumours began to be whispered about the hamlet as to the cause of their periodical absences. Dark hints were thrown out and conjectures hazarded which made the blood of the more timid among the villagers run cold with horror. These suspicions quickly took a less shadowy form ; the whispers long bandied about in secret gathered strength, and what were at first only surmises assumed consistency and were put forth as specific charges. A villager at this juncture came forward with a strange story.

"It was the day after the ninth anniversary of the deed of blood, which had never been forgotten by these simple-minded people. He stated in effect that on the night of the previous anniversary he had been out in the forest till a very late hour, setting some traps to catch squirrels; that one of the traps he had brought with him failed to act with sufficient ease; that he sat down by the thicket where he intended to fix it, and set to work with some tools he had to put it in order; that, while so employed, time quickly passed, and, on looking up, he saw by the stars that it was about midnight; that, somewhat irritated at the length of time he had been engaged in his task, he was about raising himself to hie his way homeward, when, to his great alarm, he heard the sound of rustling close to where he was sitting; that he turned his head quickly round, and saw, as plain as he could see anything, the form of a large white wolf; that the moon, which had hitherto been concealed behind some drifting clouds, broke out from the veil which had dimmed its brightness, and shone brightly on the body of the wolf; that, prompted by some strange impulse, he sprang up, and, leaving behind his traps and tools, hastily followed the wild animal; that the wolf bounded away at a furious pace, with which, of course, he could not compete, but that he managed, nevertheless, being swift of foot, to keep him within view; that the wolf made in a direction that brought him to the 'moated grange' of the lawyer, M. Le Fanu; and that, after clearing the outskirts of the forest, he was lost to view under the walls of the mysterious mansion inhabited by the Frenchman.

"The narrator proceeded to say that after he had taken

a short rest—for he was quite out of breath—and thought over this strange occurrence, a terrible idea took possession of his brain. A white wolf, as is well known, is an exceedingly rare animal, and the popular belief ascribes to them an origin of a fearful character, which I mentioned in the early part of this story. However, he determined to satisfy himself, and returned to the spot where he had been startled from his peaceful occupation by the appearance of the wolf. Too true was his surmise; he shuddered on recognizing the very thicket where, on that day eight years before, the murder had been committed! He had been sitting carelessly within a few feet of the exact spot on which was wrought the most dreadful tragedy known for many years in that part of the country.

“‘But,’ continued the man to his excited auditory, who listened to the weird tale with bated breath—‘but, determined to satisfy myself that my more than suspicions were well grounded previously to laying them before you, my neighbours, for you to take such action as you may think fit, I waited till last night. Now, you are all doubtless aware that last night was the ninth anniversary of the fearful event which has caused us all so much grief, and I resolved to wait till then, and see whether the same thing would happen again. I thought this time it would be better for me to take up a position close to that part of the moat surrounding M. Le Fanu’s house where the white wolf disappeared. I could then, I argued, without fear of detection, have a good view of the features of the beast, which, as you, my neighbours, know, always bears so strong a resemblance to the countenance of the parricide whose spirit may animate its body. Accordingly I stationed myself in a niche of the wall, close to the small

wicket-gate through which the attorney always gains access to his dreary mansion ; for, as you are aware, the large iron-studded door, which forms the chief means of ingress, has never been opened since his occupation of the premises. Well, the time passed slowly away until midnight struck ; the hour had at length arrived, and my patience was rewarded. As the church clock up yonder was chiming to the sleeping village the hour of midnight, a sound as of some one rushing through the low under-wood close at hand fell upon my ear. I eagerly turned my head in the direction whence the noise proceeded, and, sure enough, there came bounding towards the spot where I was concealed a great 'white wolf.' In another instant the huge brute made for the wicket-gate within three yards of where I lay hid. The gate was opened at the same moment from within, by a hand I could not see ; the wolf gathered himself up for a spring, and, with one bound, had cleared the low paling, and was lost to sight within the dreary dwelling.'

" 'What?' ejaculated the listeners, all rising up from their seats with a look of horror ; 'the white wolf in the Frenchman's house ! Then it must be that Gotzloff.'

" 'Wait, my friends,' said the woodcutter, 'and you shall hear all. I drew a long breath—not of relief, but of horror ; a cold perspiration broke over my whole body, and I felt as if I should faint, for I had seen quite closely the face of the beast, and it was no other than the face of Gotzloff !'

" After this mysterious story was concluded, some half-dozen of the boldest among the villagers determined to test the truth of it, and, for that purpose, decided upon secretly watching—that is, on the return of the next anniver-

sary of the murder—for the appearance of the white wolf. Nothing could be done now ; but, meanwhile, they would keep their own counsel. Strangely enough, and as if to corroborate the truth of the story, the woodcutter—to whom, early in the narrative, I referred as having been involuntarily the sole witness to conduct on the part of Gotzloff that seemed to him at the time inexplicable, but which, read by the light of recent events, with which he only now became acquainted, bore a terrible significance—returned, his time of service in the army having expired. On hearing him, no reasonable doubt could exist that Gotzloff had committed perhaps the most heinous crime of which a man can be guilty ; and that for the sake of the glittering heap of gold the woodcutter had espied through the chink in the shutter, and which had excited the cupidity of M. Le Fanu no less than that of the evil-minded son.

“The plans of the villagers were now laid, and the self-appointed judges waited with what patience they could command for the return of the day and hour when outraged justice would be at length satisfied. The time which seemed to hang so heavily on their hands at length rolled by, and as the cold winds of winter howled and whistled around the hamlet, and the changes of the seasons brought again that period of the year when the advent of the shortest day is hailed as the earliest precursor of returning spring, the conclave of peasants frequently held private meetings to make their arrangements so as to avoid all possibility of a failure. To these humble peasants it seemed a matter of the most paramount importance that the criminal Gotzloff should be brought to justice, for until the shedding of the blood of the mur-

dered victims had been expiated by blood, not only was the fair name of their native place degraded from its hitherto high position, but they felt an offended Heaven would continue to withhold its countenance and blessing from their hearths. To this effect spoke the leader of the party, as he harangued his followers on the eve of the night that was to solve their doubts, and proclaim to the world whether the man Gotzloff was in very deed the monster of iniquity they held him to be. As the chief of these self-constituted myrmidons of the law ceased to speak, there was an interval of stern silence ; all were impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, for the fact that the criminal conviction of the murderer could only be attained by his involuntary assumption of the form of a white wolf, struck a feeling of awe into the hearts of the boldest there, as above everything these ignorant people were superstitious. The next night the party of nine men assembled together, each one armed only with a long hunting-knife. They formed a line from the close vicinity of the thicket where the bodies had been discovered to the border of the forest, where lay the open space around M. Le Fanu's house ; it was decided also that two couples of powerful hunting-dogs should be employed to follow the wolf when they gave chase. Their plans were all arranged without any one in the village becoming cognisant of what was on the *tapis*. At ten o'clock each man repaired to his allotted station by a circuitous route, so as to avoid observation. The dogs also, securely muzzled so as to prevent any noise or barking, were ready at their posts, each couple in charge of one man. All the preparations were completed without any mischance, for they had been frequently rehearsed, in order

to obviate the chance of any miscarriage. Eleven o'clock came and past, and midnight was fast approaching. The hearts of all beat high with a degree of expectation and excitement, which, in some of the watchers, was closely allied to fear. It was a stormy night; the wind swept along the ground in gusty squalls, and moved with a mighty noise through the tall trees, which bent again beneath the passing gale; the wailing sound overhead seemed to the attentive ears of many of the stout-hearted hunters like the lamentations of lost souls, while one, more imaginative than his neighbours, afterwards declared, with solemnity, that he distinctly heard the voices of the aged couple murdered hard by, and that they repeated the name of Gotzloff, Gotzloff, Gotzloff, with unvarying iteration, and in mournful cadences that rose and fell with the storm. Truly it was a fearful night, and the errand on which they were bent seemed a fitting one to fulfil amid such sounds and sights. The cold, too, was intense, yet none among them recked aught of that, for when the blood is stirred by strong passion or overwhelming excitement such minor inconveniences are not even thought of. Hark! what was that noise? Now it is no longer audible, but again it breaks upon the listening ear, only once more to die away. One strains every faculty, so as if possible to concentrate all the powers ordinarily distributed among the seven senses into that of hearing alone. It must be only a wail of the tempest louder than before, but certainly it seemed as if the signal, preconcerted to denote that the expected quarry was afoot, had been given. Yes, and so it is!

"The sound is of human origin, and is taken up by the next man and repeated. And this time there can be no

mistake, and the next moment a loud rustling sound is heard, and then, with a tremendous bound, a huge white wolf bursts through the forest glades, leaps over the low brushwood, and shows itself all white, and gleaming like a spectre in the open ground, in the middle of which rises the irregular dilapidated building inhabited by the hated Frenchman. There was a wild shout from many throats as the huntsmen, long compelled to inactivity in their hiding-places, rushed on to the scene. There were no craven fears now; to the winds were cast all superstitious misgivings, and each man was prompted solely by what he considered a holy duty, and that duty to hunt down remorselessly and slay the brute that harboured within its thrice-accursed carcase the spirit of the son whose hands had been imbrued in the blood of his aged parents.

“Such was the fierce desire that influenced these men. The noble hounds, straining in the leash at the sight of their traditional foe, were now let loose, and with a short quick yelp followed on the track of the savage beast. The wolf was soon aware of the danger that menaced him, and strove to balk his eager enemies. He had bent his course in the direction of the small wicket-gate; but the dogs had been stationed so as to cut him off from this retreat. Quickly seeing his danger, he changed his course, and bore away to the right, closely pursued by the blood-hounds. Now commenced a most exciting chase; but it was impossible that it could have but one termination. The wolf ran well, but in vain were his utmost exertions. He had run almost in a circle, and was coming back to the high ground, from which he had first been sighted, when, seeing that his chances of escape were at an end, he, with

the obstinate courage which is so peculiarly a characteristic of the species, turned at bay, and fought a short but desperate fight with his numerous pursuers.

“ By this time the whole of the nine men had come up to the spot where the stubborn encounter was being carried on, and were witnesses to the frantic efforts made by the wolf to tear at least one of the dogs into pieces. But he was seized by the throat and pinned to the earth at length, and the huntsmen, breaking in, drove off the dogs, and then, at the same moment, half a dozen daggers were buried in his carcase. The beast now half lay and half crouched on the ground, gasping in the last agonies, and, though fast expiring, snapped at the air with undying ferocity. As one man drew out his knife from the quivering body and repeated the blow, the brute managed to seize the weapon between his teeth, and crunched the bone handle as if it had been pith. It was the last effort ; he gave one fierce yell, more like the despairing cry of a human being ; then a savage scowl, which all recognized, lighted up the features, while the glaring eyes shone with a most baleful gleam, and then, with a shudder, he rolled over on his side, a foul mangled carcase. No one who heard it ever forgot that last scream of anguish ; but it did not require that unearthly sound to convince the actors on the scene that

“ ‘ The great wolf, all torn and dead—
Tremendous still in death !’

which now lay senseless before them, had been animated by the soul of none other than their mysterious countryman. The face in every lineament and in every line was the face of the parricide Gotzloff. Sir, from that hour

the inhuman wretch, who had for gold committed the greatest of crimes, was never seen more, and no one in that remote village but believes to this day that he was slain in the manner I have related, according to the fearful doom by which it is ordained that every man who takes away the life of either of the authors of his being, shall, on every anniversary of the deed, assume the form of a wolf."

"And the attorney?" said I, as my companion broke off abruptly.

"The attorney, M. Le Fanu, shut himself up in his old château, and would see no one. At length he went raving mad, and had to be kept in confinement. While in the mad-house, he often used to rave about his crimes; sometimes he spoke of having forged a will with certain signatures to it, and talked also of his hands being stained with blood. One day, while his attendant's attention was distracted by something to which he had cunningly called his notice, the madman rushed up a flight of stairs, and precipitated himself from a window on to the pavement below. He was dashed to pieces on the spot, and died without a groan. Thus ended the lives of the chief actors in this tragedy."

My "shikarri" Imhoff here rose from his seat, and, asking me for a bumper of brandy, which he tossed off raw, said that, for his part, he would sit up till morning, as he could not sleep after reciting the horrible story, and, moreover, felt too cold to hope for any rest. I bid him good night, and, pondering much on what I had heard, retired to rest, and slept the sleep of the weary.



HOW I NEARLY SAW THE BOTTOM OF THE "COVE OF MUSCAT."

FEW men can have made the sea their profession for many years, at least in the navy, without having passed through strange scenes and places, and also experienced some narrow escapes to life and limb. But as there is a Providence "that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we may," so the same invisible but beneficent power seems to have a peculiar regard for the welfare of the sailor: according to the old nautical song, there is "a sweet little cherub who sits up aloft and looks after the life of poor Jack."

Perhaps an incident that occurred in my naval career, although certainly not of a startling and sensational character, may be thought worthy of narration. Though the circumstance will not "point a moral," it may possibly—should it "adorn a tale"—be deemed none the less interesting. At the time, I well remember, we all thought it no laughing matter, and some among us were anxiously calculating our chances of being consigned to "Davy Jones's locker."

I will now, gentle reader, with your kind permission, request you to "consider yourself" at Muscat, which, as you are of course aware, from your intimacy with the use of the "globes," is situated on the coast of Arabia, about 150 miles from the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Whenever I read "Lallah Rookh" I think of days past in that dreary gulf. It certainly cannot be called an uninteresting locality. The poets who have sung of its beauties, from the Persian "Hafiz" to our own Thomas Moore, would alone render it ground sacred to the muses of poetry and song; but I must say—though ever anxious during my wanderings to discover the poetic interest which might attach to the country or place where I happened to be sojourning—I never could, for the life of me, discover what Tommy Moore found in this inland sea, or the shores which surround it, to go into raptures about. Perhaps the mysterious beauties of which he raved were too deeply hidden to be patent to any ordinary vision, or to one not gifted with the poetic second sight. To give an example, Moore writes—doubtless at the time "in a fine frenzy"—in this wise of Bahrein:—

"The morn hath risen clear and calm,
And o'er the Green* Sea palely shines,
Revealing Bahrein's groves of palm
And lighting Kishma's amber vines."

Now, it is hard to say which island bears off the palm for sterility, whether Bahrein, with its "groves of palm," or Kishm (or Kishma, as the poet calls it) with its "amber vines," a trace even of which luxurious plant I have never discovered in the latter spot. I always used to think, in contrasting the two islands, that that one off which the

* The Persians call the gulf, and justly, the Green Sea.

ship at the time happened to be anchored was the most uninviting. As I have thus gazed at the desolate desert shore of those dreary, never-to-be-forgotten places, I have rubbed my eyes and turned back to the page before me from the sad reality which blasted my eyesight; I speak the word "blasted" advisedly, and with a literal meaning, for the hot wind would blow in a strong sirocco from the shore, bearing on its wings clouds of impalpable but gritty atoms of the sand which spreads in arid and seemingly limitless wastes as far as the eye can reach, that is, if the optic organs are in a condition, after a sandstorm, to "reach" anywhere. At such times I would leave the deck in disgust, and, thoroughly disenchanted, descend the companion ladder leading to the wardroom, the while recalling to my mind—with an inward ejaculation of "lucky fellow"—the fact that Moore had never in his life been in this part of the world, and therefore performed the mental feat which has rendered famous the philosophic German professor who had never seen a camel, but nevertheless "evolved out of his inner consciousness" a likeness of the animal.

Soon after I was appointed first lieutenant of H.M.S. *Boomerang* we received orders to sail for the Persian Gulf, and after rather a long voyage (for we encountered baffling winds most of the way, and the *Boomerang* was an old-fashioned eighteen-gun sloop-of-war), we at length dropped our anchor in Muscat Cove. This place, like many Eastern cities that I have visited, presents a very fine appearance from a distance; but, most surely, in this instance,

" 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view ; "

for when you come to land, and walk in its miserable

streets, you are at once struck with the seeming poverty and squalor of the town. The thoroughfares, even for an Oriental city, are so extraordinarily narrow, that the inhabitants often, during the heat of the day, spread palm-leaves across from the upper parts of the houses, and this extemporised awning effectually shades the footpath below. Talking of the heat, I really believe Muscat to be the hottest place on this earth, and this distinction it actually bears in the East. Seldom is the thermometer below 90° in the shade. This intense heat is attributable to the fact that the town is situated on the slope, and at the foot of an amphitheatre of craggy hills. No breeze can consequently come from the interior, and it is only open to the sea from the N.W. From this point very often gales of wind quickly arise and blow into the small cove, which is not considered, therefore, very safe by seafaring men. If your anchors do not hold on such occasions, your ship must inevitably be driven on the rocks which almost landlock the bay. On the summit of these precipitous cliffs are built the forts which guard the harbour, and which are about the most tumble-down looking specimens of fortifications I have ever encountered in all my peregrinations. One would think that the concussion from our guns, as we salute the flag of the Imaum, would bring them down about the ears of the swarthy artillerymen who crowd the embattlements; but when these same "sons of guns" betake themselves to their quarters and commence firing the return salute—a compliment which is paid by a dropping irregular discharge far from agreeable to the ears of well-disciplined men-o'-war's-men—one positively feels alarmed for the safety of the unhappy gunners. The ordnance, some of which,

from their antique appearance, you would suppose had been cast in the "good old days of Haroun al Raschid," have an inveterate habit of bursting, and thus prematurely consigning to the bosom of "the Prophet" the bodies of the "true believers" who man them. On such joyous occasions, too, the dilapidated walls—in the embrasures of which the cannon are often simply laid without carriages of any description—crumble to pieces, and we used to watch, with amusement, the shower of stones which came clattering down the steep rocks.

The Imaum who was ruling when we visited the place, had been for more than forty years our staunch and trusted ally; the British Government had made him handsome presents as a recognition of his fidelity, and he, determined not to be outdone in liberality, returned the compliment by sending Her Majesty some most valuable Arab horses. Whenever any of the Queen's or East India Co.'s ships of war entered his ports, whether at Zanzibar or Muscat (for at that time the two territories were under one ruler), the old man always received the officers in great state, but with the utmost affability, and after coffee and sherbet with sweetmeats had been handed round, sent them away loaded with handsome presents. The sailors, also, were not forgotten, but were provided with boat-loads of fruit and vegetables at his Highness's expense. These Eastern potentates have still the old patriarchal ways of showing the respect as allies, or allegiance as vassals, they owe to the great English nation. Often when cruising along the desolate coasts of the African continent I have seen those wild chiefs or sheiks of the desert, who might wish to deprecate the wrath of the dreaded "Feringhees" for some predatory or lawless act

of their tribe, bring off to the ship, as peace-offerings, such presents as sheep and dates.

Soon after our arrival at Muscat, a party of the officers of the *Boomerang*, including myself, went on shore together "for a cruise," and also to visit the British consular agent. I happened to have known this gentleman at Aden some years before, and a very slight acquaintance is required in the East to form a sufficient apology to allow of one's claiming the hospitality of a fellow-countryman. On landing, we found, on a closer inspection, that the only buildings which could be really called handsome were the mosques, which, with their lofty minarets, were certainly picturesque; and the Imaum's palace and harem, out of the windows and in the verandahs of which could be seen the graceful figures of the dark beauties immured within their walls, their faces being also partially concealed by the envious veil worn by Mahommedan women. The Sultan had about three hundred of these ladies cooped up in his palace, and some of them were now looking about and inspecting with curious eyes the "dogs of unbelievers" who had landed under the windows of the seraglio. After strolling through the narrow streets and going into the market-place or bazaar, where we purchased some articles and "curios," we bent our steps to the Consulate. The "Political Agent" welcomed us heartily, and we were all soon discussing a good dinner and a Persian wine which comes from Shiraz, and is sold in "carboys." Some people profess to think it better than sherry; but I think it is much the same with this wine as with "Cape;" people who can't afford to drink the more expensive liquor, but are too proud to own it, always protest, when filling your wineglass with the somewhat mawkish substitute, that

they "much prefer it to sherry, my dear sir ; always drink it." Not that our host on this occasion regaled us with Shiraz alone ; he was too much of a connoisseur, and too liberal for that. We chatted away about old times at Aden, and never thought how the hours were passing, or what weather might be brewing off that capricious coast.

The captain had requested us all to be on board before ten o'clock, as he intended weighing anchor at daylight, did nothing unforeseen occur. While one of my messmates, who had a fine voice, was troling out a song, suddenly through the open window we heard the loud report of a gun. There could be no mistaking it, for the sound was borne in upon the breeze, which was blowing in our direction, and the lofty hills and precipitous crags surrounding the harbour echoed the report as if it had been a thunder-peal. Up we all jumped, and hastened to look out of the open window. The night was dark as pitch, and a rather fresh breeze from the mouth of the harbour told us that doubtless the captain was counting upon a nor'-wester, and felt more desirous of getting a good offing from the dangerous lee shore than placing his trust in bower anchors. This view of the case was strengthened by the black clouds which were rising from seaward, portending doubtless a gale of wind from that quarter.

"Why, R——," said I to our host, "the captain is getting the *Boomerang* under weigh. What's the time, Hanson ?"

When the paymaster (whom I had addressed) consulted his watch, we found that it was only half-past eight o'clock, and as the sloop-of-war was lying at the entrance to the cove and some distance from the point of departure for

boats, it would take us at least half an hour to get down to the shore and pull off to the ship.

"What does the old buffer want?" said Her Majesty's representative, with a degree of asperity for which one would hardly have given him credit.

"He is afraid of weathering it out here, and would rather trust to seamanship and the ship's weatherly qualities," I said, though at the same time I had a misgiving that this was a stratagem of the commander's to get me into a scrape; and for this reason.

I had only joined his ship about a week before she sailed for the Persian Gulf, having received orders to that effect from the commander-in-chief at Bombay, where I had just arrived on my return from England on sick leave. The officer who was doing the duty of first lieutenant on board the *Boomerang* had filled that post for more than two years to the complete satisfaction of his superior, with whom he was, moreover, a great favourite; my being thus appointed, unsolicited, over the head of this gentleman placed me in a most invidious position, and although, like a good fellow as he was, he himself harboured no resentment against me (for my messmates knew well that I had applied to be removed to another ship), the captain looked on my appointment with no friendly eye, and was only watching for an opportunity to place me under arrest or get me transferred elsewhere. I had a shrewd suspicion, therefore, that this was a move in that direction, and the more so as Mr. Dangerfield, whom I had superseded, and who was doing duty as second lieutenant, had not come on shore with the rest of us. Without a moment's loss of time, we all bade our host adieu, and with promises to visit him again whenever the ship returned to Muscat,

hurried down to the landing-stage. The boom of a second gun now rattled in the night air through the silent and deserted streets, from the direction of the harbour, and we picked our way carefully, but with quickened pace, now over the bodies of some sleeping beggars, and then again across the gutters which ran along the footway. The Consul had thoughtfully sent some of his servants with lanterns to light us through the narrow crooked lanes which did duty for streets. We were not long in reaching the beach, where the few boats that plied for hire in the harbour were secured ; but to our dismay the boatmen one and all refused to take us out to the *Boomerang*. They said it was going to blow great guns, and it was more than their lives might be worth. In vain we offered a bribe of ten rupees, which represented a large sum of money in their eyes, and was more than they could hope to earn in a fortnight : they were proof against even the incentive of gold. The wily natives evidently had fears, from the experience they had gathered from former dealings with Europeans, that we might take by main force what we could not obtain by fair means, and had therefore taken the precaution, on the first sound of our footsteps, of shoving off from the shore in their dingies and sailing-boats, so that we could only threaten the recalcitrant boatmen with all kinds of penalties from the "bunder" or landing-stage.

Expostulations, entreaties, and threats of the thrashing we would give them were all useless, and we were in a state of despair, when a thought struck me. I caught sight of a canoe which was lying safely moored to the "bunder," and the owners of which were quietly watching the altercation, and conjuring the boatmen to take the

"sahib logue" off to the ship. The three natives who owned the crazy little craft considered themselves and their canoe quite removed from all chance of being pressed into so perilous a service as putting out to sea on such a "dirty night," and therefore could afford the cheap sort of magnanimity involved in praying their countrymen to take us on board, though even at a slight risk to their safety.

In my mind there was but one fixed determination : it was absolutely essential that we should go on board that night, at any hazard and at any cost, with a crew of pressed men, should volunteers not come forward ; and, moreover, if we could not get a stout sailing-boat, why, we must embark in a canoe. Only urgent necessity induced me to take so very hazardous a step, with a rising gale blowing in our teeth, and the night intensely dark. No sooner had I formed the resolve than I seized the canoe by the "painter," and told the astonished crew that I intended putting off in her to the ship. They laughed, thinking I was in a jocose humour ; but I called to my companions, and soon showed them that what I said was in sober earnest. Then one of them suddenly attempted to haul the painter out of my hand, while the others pushed off with their paddles ; but I was up to the move, and jumping into her, threatened them with a short "soom-aullie" club I had taken on shore with me. At the same time I asked my friends to join me in my venture. We numbered four in all ; two of the party demurred, and the doctor refused point blank to embark in such a frail barque. "Why," he said, "it would be madness."

"What are we to do here then ?" I rejoined ; "there is the ship under weigh, or at all events heaving up

her anchor, and she is bound to Bushire, and will not certainly return to this place for months, and perhaps not for a year or two." One of them then said that the captain could not do without the ship's surgeon, even if he dispensed with the services of a first lieutenant and paymaster, and therefore he was only trying to frighten us. Just as we were arguing the point with great warmth, the flash of a third gun was visible, and the loud "bang" startled us as the report of the 32-pounder was borne upon our ears by the wind. "This is no time for parleying like a lot of old women," I said angrily, and called to the two officers, who were yet wavering as to what to do. The gun-fire seemed to decide them to join me, and the next minute they quickly "followed motions," and stepped carefully into the canoe. "Shove off," I shouted. This brought the unhappy "bolus," as we used to nickname the surgeon, to his senses, and he called out to me to wait a minute, for he was coming. On my doing as he requested, however, he began to expostulate again on our rashness, and implored me to return to the Consulate; but seeing his remonstrances were useless, he joined us with a look of desperation, and the canoe was pushed off, and the three Arab boatmen forced to "give way" with their flat paddles. Truly it was a venturesome, not to say foolhardy undertaking, on which we had embarked. The craft was an ordinary-shaped canoe, the fragile timbers of which were sewn together; it was just broad enough for a man of ordinary "beam" to sit in, and being shallow, with a round "floor," drew very little water. This of course made it rock about with every slight wave, and before we had got a couple of hundred yards from the shore, it began to take in water

over the bows and broadside. We were also obliged to hold on with both hands to the gunwale to assist in steadying the canoe. It was highly diverting to watch the doctor's countenance and hear the lugubrious exclamations he made use of as the sea-water soused his uniform; he was certain, he said, we should never reach the ship, and he would have to thank my obstinacy if we were all drowned. At first his fears were only dictated by feelings of unmanly timidity, but the further we went out into the bay, the more the danger increased. The wind continued to freshen, and with it the sea rose until we had to set to work and bale the boat out with what cooking utensils we could lay our hands on.

Again and again the old sloop fired a shot, which sullenly rang over the waters with an angry roar, while the flash for a brief moment lit up the lowering skies overhead, and the rising waves over which our frail barque was struggling along. The natives pulled well, and to encourage them in their exertions we promised them lots of "backsheesh" on reaching the ship. At one time they were for laying down their paddles and betaking themselves in prayerful mood to Allah; but though the religious feeling which dictated this desire was in itself no doubt highly commendable, the exercise of it under the existing circumstances would have been the cause of our instant destruction, for I knew well that, if the boat fell off before the wind for one single second, so as to bring her broadside to the waves, that moment would have been our last. A long narrow craft like ours would "turn turtle" at the first touch of a "beam sea," and leave us all struggling in that open bay. Every energy was bent on making way, and keeping at the same time head to sea.

Our position had now become most precarious, and I half repented my rashness. Luckily for myself I could swim, and had before more than once saved myself by the practice of this very necessary accomplishment; but I knew the surgeon and third lieutenant could not, and the former asseverated, with a vehemence of expression which quite impressed me with its truth, that he intended "to stick to me." This, no doubt, under other circumstances, might be held as a touching exhibition of friendship, but at the present time, to say the least of it, I considered the avowal inopportune and out of place. I secretly pulled off my boots and made other preparations, which the darkness of the night effectually concealed, to prepare for a battle with the black surging waters around me, and inwardly determined not to allow my friend "Bolus" to clasp me round the neck, or hang on to my legs, or in fact, to take any such-like liberties with my person. Just then the *Boomerang* burnt a blue light, which, lighting up all her rigging and spars, directed us to where she was lying, and our fellows, encouraged by her proximity to us, gave way with renewed energy, while we began shouting at the top of our voices, with the hope that the sound might reach our messmates' ears; but the attempt was perfectly vain, for the wind was blowing from the ship, and our voices were consequently wafted in a contrary direction. I could see, that though the *Boomerang* was still at anchor, she had her sails "sheeted home," and her topsail yards "braced up" for "casting." The "baling" was constant, and still we were unable to keep the canoe clear, for the sea every now and then made a clean breach over the bows, and almost washed us out bodily. The rain also fell in heavy showers, and, driving full into our

faces, half blinded us, and drenched our clothes, though this was rather a work of supererogation, for the salt water had already effectually performed the task.

The doctor was in such a state of abject alarm, that he could do little but bitterly inveigh against us all for undertaking so insane a project. We could not return now, for any attempt to put the canoe's head round would infallibly have capsized her, and besides, we were so near the ship when last she loomed up in the dark under the glare of the blue light, that we hoped soon to be able to make our voices heard, when the captain would of course lower a cutter to bring us on board. So passed another five minutes, when again a gun was fired, and a blue light burned ; but oh ! horror ! quite in another direction, and further out to sea by at least half a mile, as well as we could judge. The truth was now obvious. The *Boomerang* was actually under weigh, and was leaving us there on that wild stormy sea exposed to the full fury of the pitiless nor'-wester which was blowing with increasing force every moment, and in such a bay, too, as the Cove of Muscat ; for, being girt round by a very precipitous coast, it has always been one of the bugbears of seamen. I confess my heart began to sink within me, as would that, I am sure, of many a stouter man under the same circumstances. Our position was perilous, but providentially the boatmen seemed to take courage of despair, and pulled away without a moment's flinching. Not as much can be said of my pusillanimous countryman, who seemed paralyzed with fear, and could hardly give utterance to his terrified feelings.

The captain's conduct was unaccountable, for he must have known that I would at all risks have obeyed so

peremptory an order to return on board, as¹ is conveyed by the firing of guns. Thus to leave us to our fate after luring us out, like a will o' the wisp inveigling an unlucky traveller on a pathless morass, was a singular proceeding, to say the least of it. We were at the mouth of the bay, and felt the full force of the wind, which was blowing half a gale. How the fragile canoe ever managed to "weather" it as she had done, I cannot imagine; our safety, hitherto, was due entirely to the clever way in which the natives, aided by some of us, kept her bows facing the swell without deviating a point. They were getting exhausted now, however, and so were we. It could only end in our destruction, for the sloop was by this time doubtless sailing away for Bushire, and we were alone, without any other means of saving ourselves.

In sullen and blank despair the plucky Arab Lascars were about giving up the unequal struggle, when we heard "Boat ahoy!" shouted in a chorus of stentorian voices. Hurrah! we were saved! The sound was certainly not more than two or three hundred yards distant, and we knew that it proceeded from a party of our shipmates who had come just in time to rescue us. Didn't we halloo back, that's all! I'll be bound we did, and in voices not a whit less stentorian than our brave comrades. Why even the wretched doctor plucked heart of grace, and managed to squeak out in choked utterances a welcome, and a hearty welcome too—which, to tell the truth, was rather an unusual thing for him, for not one of the "jolly tars" of the *Boomerang* ever saw the "colour of his liquor," as I once heard a forecandleman assert. In justice to naval surgeons, I must own that such men as our hero are very rare in Her Majesty's service.

The next minute we saw the black hull of the boat looming up close to us, and the officer in the stern-sheets had just time to put the helm "hard up" to avoid coming into collision with the canoe; for our appearance on the water somewhat resembled the mathematical definition of a line—"length without breadth," and we were hardly distinguishable a boat's length ahead. On ranging alongside, all of us, including the surgeon, who tumbled in first and foremost, and head foremost too, lost no time in scrambling into the roomy cutter, where we felt as safe as if on *terra firma* after the flimsy craft in which we had been cruising about.

The question now arose as to what we were to do with the canoe: it would be inhuman to cast her off, and leave the wretched worn-out crew to find their way ashore the best way they could; such a manner of solving the difficulty, on a stormy night like this, would have been little better than actual murder. However, the officer in charge of the cutter soon relieved us of all anxiety by proposing that the boatmen should be transferred to a large "buggalow," or native craft, they had passed just before sighting us, and which lay at anchor in close proximity to where we then were. This was a good idea, and, ere many minutes, the cutter, towing the canoe in her wake, had succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of the "buggalow," and we boarded her without ceremony, to the astonishment and no little alarm of the Arab Lascars who manned her, and who mistook us in the dark for pirates. The canoe was made fast astern; we gave the wearied boatmen, who had behaved so pluckily and pulled so well, the promised reward of ten rupees, very much to their delight, and then left them "salaaming"

to us for our liberality, and praying to Allah that "our shadows might never grow less."

We shoved off, and made our way as quickly as possible to the sloop-of-war, which continued burning lights to enable us to make out her position. After a short pull through the blinding rain and angry sea, which buffeted the cutter as if in ill temper at being deprived of its victims, the heaving outline of the old ship loomed up vast and gaunt as a spectre, with her white sails glimmering through the driving mist and murky darkness. It was rather more re-assuring to sit in the stern-sheets of the well-built cutter, with her sturdy crew of twelve brawny seamen urging her through the waves till the foam flew right over us in heavy showers, than to squat cramped up on a narrow thwart in a hastily-constructed canoe, which, pulled by paddles only, had no hold on the water, but offered a fair front to the strong nor'-wester. Presently we heard again the welcome hail of "Boat a-hoy!" and were very soon clambering "hand over fist" up the rolling sides of the *Boomerang*, the quartermaster the while standing in the gangway, holding the lantern to guide us. In another minute we all stood safe and sound, but drenched to the skin, on the deck of the ship; the cutter was hoisted up, and the mainyard swung to catch the favouring breeze. The captain met me as I set foot on the quarter-deck, looking like "a bear with a sore head," the very picture of an irrational, ill-tempered naval martinet. After a short altercation, in which he accused me of breaking the rules established for the ship's discipline and setting a bad example to the men and junior officers, and a few words in reply from me, in which I indignantly repudiated the construction he put on my

conduct, and reminded him that he distinctly gave me to understand the sloop would not sail before ten o'clock, whereas he had got under weigh at half-past eight—the interview ended, as I had expected, by his placing me under "open arrest," and ordering the second lieutenant to conduct the duties of "executive" officer until further orders, I went down into my cabin quite composedly, and during the time I was under arrest, which was for more than a fortnight, managed to amuse myself with my books entirely to my satisfaction. The captain's conduct was so palpably unjust and partial, in that he had taken no notice whatever of the breach of discipline of which the three other officers who were my companions on the occasion, equally with myself, were guilty, that I could afford to treat the affair with indifference. Before we reached Bushire he had released me from arrest, and ordered me to return to my duty.

On the arrival of the frigate bearing the broad pennant of the commodore commanding the Persian Gulf squadron, I applied to be exchanged into some other ship, and so little had my reputation suffered from the spiteful conduct of the captain of the *Boomerang*, that the gallant old commodore, with whom I had sailed before, put me in orders for his own ship, which I need scarcely say was considered rather a triumph for your humble servant.



HANDS, WITNESS PUNISHMENT !

HAVE any of my readers witnessed flogging "as performed" (to borrow the phraseology of theatrical bills) in her Majesty's navy? I presume few of you have. You certainly have lost no pleasure thereby, but rather have escaped one of the most painful, and perhaps *the* most degrading of scenes that can be witnessed ashore or afloat.

How the cravers after excitement, the sensation writers of the present day would gloat over the solemn ceremonies observed on such occasions ; and then how the opportunity would be seized to describe the suspense when the surgeon feels the pulse of the wretched culprit ere the lash descends on the naked and quivering back, and again during the administration of the sentence, watches his features, so as to stay the hand of the boatswain wielding the cat, should the pain inflicted by that formidable weapon reach the limits of human endurance, and the sufferer faint away. What a picture, too, the description of all these accessories would make !

This is all sensational enough, but as the aforesaid sensation writers, unless holding a commission in her Majesty's

service, would never be in a position to witness the infliction of the cat-o'-nine-tails, for strangers are rigidly excluded, I will give an account of a flogging I witnessed when a midshipman on board a man-of-war, which I will call the *Atropos*.

We were lying in Singapore harbour, after a long cruise at sea, and the ship's company not having been on shore for three months, the captain gave orders, as our stay in port would be extended for a week, or until the senior naval officer of the station returned from sea, that the men should have leave in watches. The starboard watch went first, for twenty-four hours, and on their return on the expiration of their leave, the port watch were granted "liberty," as the sailors call it. The next day, one of the number, an extremely troublesome fellow, who had taken the bounty about six months before, and who, forgetting that he was no longer in the merchant service,—where the utmost punishment he could get, in the event of his refusal to obey orders, would be the stoppage of a few days' pay, or perhaps, if tried by the civil magistrate, a fortnight in gaol with nothing to do,—did not seem to be at all inclined to be amenable to naval discipline.

As a rule, sailors joining her Majesty's service have a great dread of martial law, and the "Articles of War,"—which are read out publicly to the whole ship's crew once every month, when all hands, with the officers in full dress, assemble on the quarter-deck,—are enough to inspire dread, for they might be written in characters of blood, so Draconic are the punishments inflicted by this code. "Death" is the penalty prescribed for such offences as would, in the procedure of civil courts, be considered

sufficiently expiated by a month's imprisonment. Theft is punished by death, as also cowardice, disobedience of orders in the face of the enemy, not doing one's utmost to get the ship off if stranded, and striking, or offering to strike, a superior officer, and many other crimes of the same magnitude. Of course these "articles" are not literally enforced, at least, not in times of peace.

This seaman,—James was his name,—when he returned with the rest of the "liberty men," was rather the worse for liquor, and after being searched at the gangway by the marine on duty, for the purpose of seeing whether he had any spirits concealed about his person, went below. About nine o'clock in the evening, however, he appeared on deck, looking much flushed, and staggering about. He commenced calling for the first lieutenant, and otherwise misconducting himself; and although some of his mess-mates, wishing to keep him clear of "coming to the gangway," as an administration of the cat is called, strove to induce him to turn in, all their efforts were useless, and they, only getting abuse and blows, left him to take his course. I was on duty at the time, and reported the man's conduct to the first lieutenant in the ward-room, who came up on deck, and was saluted with a volley of execrations and foul language from the drunken fellow. "Take that man James below," sung out the insulted officer, after eyeing the miscreant for a minute, as if undecided what steps to take. He saw how matters were tending, but wished, if possible, to avoid having recourse to extreme measures. Some petty officers were called aft, and, seizing the truculent sailor, carried him off. James was a man of extraordinary power, and it was as much as six of them could do to carry him down the fore

companion on to the lower deck. We had now a little quiet, but not for long ; up he rushed again, shouting like a madman, and "making night hideous" by his oaths and promises of revenge on all the officers. The first lieutenant, who had returned to the ward-room, appeared on deck again, looking very angry and not in a mood to be trifled with. "Carry that blackguard below!" he shouted, when James walked up to him in a threatening manner. He was again fisted, however, and half lifted, half thrown on the lower deck.

The lieutenant and I followed the party below, handcuffs were procured, and the gunner and his mates, with the master-at-arms, proceeded to manacle his hands. There was another hatchway leading down to the orlop deck, and round the opening was a railing about four feet high. I was leaning against this, looking on at the operations, when suddenly the infuriated seaman pushed aside the gunner's crew, and in a moment was by my side. In the position I had assumed, I was totally unprepared for any resistance, and even had I been ready to encounter him, I, then a youth of seventeen, would have been almost powerless in the hands of such a muscular giant. He seized me round the waist in his nervous grasp, and before I could even attempt any resistance, lifted me off my feet, and was on the point of hurling me down into the ship's hold, which was open, on to the ballast, when, quick as thought, a petty officer, who had been with me in another ship, and for whom I had before done a good turn, caught hold of me, and rescued me from my perilous position.

James was immediately held down by some of the men who had crowded round us, among the number being the first lieutenant, who, seeing my danger, had also laid hands

on him. The fellow turned round, and with a last effort struck the officer a staggering blow on the chest. He was then at once manacled hand and foot, and locked up in a cell, there to think over his final achievement. He had brought himself within the pale of martial law, and committed an offence for which a man has been strung up at the yard-arm in the old days when the "articles of war" were stern realities, made to be acted upon.

The captain, when he came on board, at once decided what to do with the delinquent, and not having it in his power to inflict more than twelve lashes, which he considered wholly inadequate to meet the enormity of the offence, determined to await the arrival of the commodore, and then prefer charges before a court-martial. Accordingly, one was constituted for the trial of the prisoner Francis James, on the charge that he did "strike his superior officer, being in the execution of his duty," contrary to one of the articles of war made and provided to punish such offences. On the morning of the trial, which was held on board the flagship, as the clock struck eight, instead of the ensign, which is on ordinary occasions run up at the mizen-peak, was hoisted the union-jack, and a gun fired to indicate that a court-martial was about to be held. The court was not long in arriving at a decision on the evidence adduced as to the prisoner's culpability, and he had no defence, except the miserable one, that he was mad drunk, and did not know what he was doing. His previous conduct had been unsatisfactory, and he was condemned to receive fifty lashes on the bare back with the cat-o'-nine tails, and then to be imprisoned for a period of two years in the common gaol with hard labour. He was amazed at the severity of the sentence, and all the bra-

vado he had displayed during the course of the trial deserted him when he heard the award of his crime pronounced. He was taken back to his cell, and kept in confinement for two days on bread and water, until the morning arrived for the first part of his sentence to be carried out.

About seven o'clock the carpenter and his two assistants, or mates as they are styled, "rigged the gratings." The gratings take the place of the "triangle" on shore, and are rigged in this wise. Two capstan bars or handspikes are placed in a nearly upright position against the main rigging, one end resting on the deck, and both properly secured so as to prevent them moving. Across these are lashed two ordinary gratings, one breast high, and the other a little lower; and then the carpenter has done his share of the work, and reports to the first lieutenant that the "gratings are rigged." After breakfast all hands "clean" in their best, and the officers also indue themselves in full dress, with *epaulettes*, cocked hats, and swords, as if going to a ball, for the scene is always made as impressive and ceremonious as possible, in order to strike terror into the hearts of the evil-disposed. It sometimes has an efficacious effect among the badly-inclined, and it is curious to see with what alacrity these gentry will do their work, while the example yet remains fresh on the memory. The men speak little, and look grave, for the feeling that they are liable to this degrading punishment is distasteful to them, and it is brought prominently to their attention by all the preparations so ostentatiously made. At nine o'clock punctually the drums beat to divisions, according to the daily routine, and the crew assemble in their starboard and port watches; "toeing a line," they are mustered and inspected by the

officers, and any of them who are not scrupulously clean, or whose clothes present a slovenly appearance, are reported to the first lieutenant, and punished. Those penalties are various, according to the custom of each ship or commanding officer—sometimes men have to carry heavy handspikes for hours, or perhaps a round shot in each hand, or else stand in the rigging, or, as is most common, have their grog stopped. These are for petty offences.

When the drum beats off, the captain orders the boatswain to pipe "Hands, witness punishment!" Then is heard the shrill whistle of that warrant officer and his mates, and their stern voices bawling out to the utmost power of their lungs, the words that form the heading of this narrative. "All hands," in answer to the summons, swarm aft again, on the port side of the deck usually. The officers are all clustered abaft on the starboard side, with the marines drawn up, with fixed bayonets, on the foremost limits of the quarter-deck. The prisoner is brought up from his cell under a guard, and the captain, addressing him, states in a few words the nature of the offence of which he has been guilty, the "article of war" he has broken, and the sentence of the court-martial. He is then ordered "to strip," when he takes off his upper garments; on his naked back becoming exposed, the master-at-arms, according to custom, keeps it covered with the culprit's shirt held across the shoulders, until the actual commencement of the sentence.

"Seize him up" is then the order, and the carpenter and his mates securely lash his wrists and ankles to the gratings by means of "seizings," of strong spunyarn. All this time the boatswain is standing by with an inoffensive-looking green bag in his hand, bearing some resemblance

to a lawyer's brief bag, but with something more portentous than musty law books concealed in it. He now opens this bag and dives into it with one hand, pulling out a formidable-looking instrument. This is the cat-o'-nine-tails ; and as he has now let the "cat out of the bag," perhaps we may take the liberty of inspecting that ugly quadruped. There is a thick wooden handle, about a foot and a half long, covered with baize generally, and on to the broad round end of which are lashed at equal intervals nine pieces of stout whipcord, each nearly a yard long, and with knots at the ends, which are also "whipped" to prevent them from unravelling. In some ships they are made differently, being garnished with more or less knots, or sometimes with none at all ; but even when the latter is the case, the "tails," which are made of the best and strongest "laid" stuff, inflict fearful blows ; and I have seen a man's back, after having received his flogging, literally like a piece of raw meat. The wounds are only superficial, however, and unless the blood is diseased, it is surprising how soon they heal, although the scars generally remain to disfigure the culprit for life. He is thenceforward a marked man, and whenever he takes off his shirt to wash himself, there are the cicatrices to testify to his disgrace. To proceed with this particular instance.

When the carpenter had reported the prisoner properly secured, the surgeon, at a sign from the captain, stepped up and felt his pulse, said something to him, and reported the man as fit to receive corporal punishment. "Boatswain, do your duty," was all the commander said. The master-at-arms drew away the shirt, exposing the body bare to the waist ; the boatswain, with the coolness of an experienced practitioner, measured the distance through

one eye, with his head cocked on one side, took a step backwards, raised his arm, and swinging the cat round his head, brought it down with a switch terrible to hear. It fell fairly on the culprit's shoulders with a dull, peculiar sound, and the instant it came into contact with the fair white flesh, nine streaks of a bright scarlet flushed over the skin, each tail making its mark distinctly. How the poor wretch shook, and his flesh seemed to quiver and creep. "One," sung out the gunner, in a clear voice, it being his duty to count aloud each stroke. The boatswain now carefully combed out the cat with his left hand, disentangling each separate tail, and making all clear for another stroke. Down came the relentless instrument of torture again over the former "wales," and "two" called out the gunner. It would be wearisome and revolting were I to recount all the painful incidents of the scene;—how the poor wretch braved it out, at first, with great *sang froid*, but gradually sighs and moans increased into cries, and he fairly shouted with the agony. After the first dozen, the senior boatswain's mate took the place of his superior, whose arm, it was supposed, was getting tired, and inflicted a dozen. Then the junior mate relieved the senior, and then again the boatswain finished the remaining fourteen. It was painful to have to witness all this, and one youngster, who had recently joined, was obliged to be carried below, as he had fainted. I have known hardy sailors, unaccustomed to the discipline of a man-of-war, to faint on the first occasion of witnessing the infliction of corporal punishment. This man James had taken the precaution customary among those about to be "triced up," of putting a pebble into his mouth, which he kept sucking and clenched firmly

between his teeth, and which has, or is supposed to have, a soothing effect—at least so those who have been under the lash assert. After the third dozen had been inflicted, James hung his head on one side, and it was thought that he had fainted; the doctor stepped up, felt his pulse, but reported that he was sufficiently strong to receive the remainder of the fifty stripes.

On the completion of the number, it seemed as if a load had been lifted off one's heart, and I breathed again freely. The miserable man was "cut down," the shirt was placed over his poor lacerated back, from which the blood was slowly trickling, and he was marched off to the sick bay, and placed under the surgeon's hands for treatment. He had a stout and muscular frame, or he must have suffered much more; but, as it was, he looked pale and sick. A dozen on board ship is always infinitely worse than a dozen administered in the army at the "triangles," and for this reason: on shore, drummers do all the flogging, and, as a rule, they are of very ordinary physique, and often undersized, while, in the navy, as I have shown, punishment is administered by the boatswain and his mates, and they are nearly always among the most powerful men on board. It is a very invidious duty, and one much disliked by good seamen, but still the blows are generally well laid on. On one occasion I knew a boatswain's mate disgraced from the rank of petty officer to A. B., because he did not exert his great strength when inflicting castigation.

For a fortnight James was under the doctor's hands, and then, when reported well, he had to undergo the remaining part of his sentence, viz., two years' imprisonment with hard labour. I was ordered away in charge

of the boat, and took him under a guard to the landing-stage, from which we marched up to the common gaol, where he was handed over to the civil authorities there, to expiate his offence against martial law.

As the object of all punishment is to deter from crime, few subjects have been more discussed, and the reasons *pro* and *con* argued with greater acerbity in the press and elsewhere, than the deterrent effects of corporal punishment. It forms one of the standing dishes at the meetings, or congresses of the "Society for the Promotion of Social Science," the youngest sister of all the sciences; and if papers read and discussions carried on with great ability could "ventilate" the subject, we ought to be well informed, but then theorists have the field usually to themselves on such occasions, and there is little knowledge displayed of the practical working of the system.

Premising that I am not one of the "speculatively-benevolent," I should say that the philanthropic theorists have the best of the argument on this point, and that it is quite possible that the discipline of the navy may be maintained at its present high state every whit as well when that degrading punishment is abolished, and that the time is not very far distant when this blot will be altogether removed from that noble service. The House of Commons, only after a great deal of opposition, passed a bill enabling the judge to inflict chastisement with the cat-o'-nine tails on garotters and such like scum of the earth! Flogging is a most unpopular exhibition on board ship, and one the men attend with loathing depicted on their averted faces. It is very well to say that it acts as a warning to the badly disposed; but anybody who has been

thrown much with sailors will agree that solitary confinement with bread and water is dreaded much more by these characters, who honour and applaud the man who behaves himself with fortitude under the infliction of the lash. If a man is incorrigible, sentence him to hard labour by court-martial, or dismiss him with ignominy the service he has disgraced by his conduct, and drive him out of the fleet to the tune of the "Rogue's March." Make him ridiculous in the eyes of his ship-mates by towing him on shore, as is the custom, on a hencoop. Few men can stand ridicule. There may be something to be admired in a man taking fifty lashes without a groan, but, depend upon it, there can be nothing heroic in being towed ashore on a hencoop, the laughing-stock of all hands. When I was at sea, the captain of a man-of-war was a perfect despot, and could by his warrant flog any man ; the same can be done now by the seaman or marine being reduced to the ranks or to the grade of A. B. The best men from the mercantile marine, who, for many reasons, such as the greater comfort, lighter work, and the pension attaching to long service, would prefer the Royal service, are deterred from joining, mainly by the fear they entertain of bringing themselves under the penalty of the cat, which can be applied to their backs at the mere caprice of an evil-tempered commanding officer. To do the navy only justice, there are very few captains who, in a matter of such importance, act on the angry impulse of the moment, but yet I have seen a man "brought to the gratings" because he answered "Ay, ay, sir," when the commander, happening to be in a towering passion, ordered him, while in the act of running up the lower rigging, to "lay up

faster." The unfortunate seaman was at once called down, made a prisoner aft on the quarter-deck, and flogged a morning or two after. This man bore a very good character, but the captain thought him insolent, and punished him accordingly ; of course the offence was not commensurate with the infliction of a dozen lashes, and the unmerited disgrace which nothing could wipe away.

It is certain that few officers holding her Majesty's commission are capable of such cruelty, but it ought to be put out of the power of any man to commit an injustice of this description, and it is my belief that not many years will elapse ere this punishment of the lash will be consigned to the same limbo of the past that holds such tortures as the thumbscrew, and future generations of free Englishmen will look back with wonder to the days when brave tars were flogged like base curs.





A LADY'S ESCAPE FROM SEEPREE IN '57.

THOSE of our countrymen who were in India in the eventful months of 1857 can never forget the terrible scenes they witnessed, and even those who, like myself, were fortunate enough, or unfortunate enough rather (for I volunteered for service, but my offer was not accepted), not to have been engaged, but who were employed in the duty of watching over the loyalty of a large force of native troops—men who might have been tempted to re-enact the scenes of Cawnpore and Delhi, had our backs been turned,—even those situated like myself will never cease to remember the harrowing tales of perils, of the “imminent deadly breach” and hair-breadth escapes narrated to them by military men and by ladies, who had escaped from the clutches of the black wretches who imbrued their hands in the blood of their own officers, and, worse than all, in the gore of unoffending women and innocent children. Narratives met the ear, and sights met the eye in those days—notwithstanding the denial that some English papers gave to the fact,

well known in India, of acts of mutilation having been perpetrated on European ladies by the fiends of Sepoys—that made every drop of blood in the veins of a man boil with passion.

I will not pain my readers by recounting any of these tales of horror, which at the time made strong men shudder; no good can come of doing so, and they had better be buried in oblivion; but I will narrate the account of a lady's escape from Seepree and Gwalior, which I have heard from the lips of the fair heroine herself.

Mrs. Fernley,—I purposely give a feigned name,—was living, in the year 1857, with her husband and three children at Seepree.

It will be seen by a reference to a map of central India that Seepree is a town in the territories of the Maharaja Scindiah, and that it is situated about 70 miles from Gwalior, the capital of that province.

Captain Fernley was an officer in the army of the Hon. East India Company; and, as is not unusual in India where native chiefs are glad to have British officers to lead their troops, he commanded a regiment of native cavalry in the Maharaja's army, or the Gwalior Contingent, as it is called, for that prince is bound to assist the English Government in case of need. Early in June reports reached Captain Fernley of the outbreaks at Meerut and Delhi, and of course he felt uneasy as to the reliability of his own men; but, like the rest of the officers of that noble Indian army, and indeed like Englishmen all the world over, he determined to remain at his post of duty, and abide the consequences, whatever they might be; not till his men actually muti-

nied did he feel he would be justified in making his escape, and he paid the penalty of his strict adherence to a sense of duty. Captain Fernley thought it only prudent, however, to make provision for the safety of his wife, who had only been confined a fortnight before the period embraced by the events of my story, and also for his three children, the eldest girl aged nine years, the little boy three, and the infant only fourteen days. It was, I need not say a sad time of anxiety and trial for the English family. Mrs. Fernley was in weak health, and totally unfit to travel, and the children had been brought up in the lap of luxury, and with a host of servants to attend to every want; yet something must be done to secure their safety. The air was thick with rumours, and every hour of the day, brought a fresh crop of reports of disasters.

One day—it was the 10th of June—Captain Fernley went to parade as usual, and he never returned. His regiment was officered on what is known in India as the irregular system, that is, there were only a first and second in command, an adjutant, and a surgeon.

His second in command was away on leave; but both himself and the adjutant were murdered on the parade-ground by their men, who cut them to pieces in their saddles. After perpetrating this crime the sowars, or native troopers, set off for Gwalior, while some proceeded to their officers' quarters for the purposes of pillage. Meanwhile an old and faithful ayah, hearing of the treacherous deed committed by Scindiah's soldiers, immediately rushed into her mistress's bedroom, and apprised her of the sad fate that had befallen her husband, praying her at the same time to flee with her children, if she

would avoid a similar fate. There was no time for Mrs. Fernley to indulge in vain lamentation over the sad bereavement that had befallen her in the death of her gallant husband ; she was, moreover, a woman of extraordinary resolution, and though she set small value on her own life, yet for the sake of her children, she resolved to exert every energy to make good her escape. Though almost fainting with bodily weakness, she summoned her brave English heart to her aid, and with the lofty fortitude that was so characteristic of our countrywomen in those troublous days, sallied forth with her three children, the two elder ones walking, and the infant in her arms. She took nothing with her but the clothes in which they stood, with the exception of a small bag of parched gram, and her husband's flask, containing water, which she slung around her. The ayah brought these things to Mrs. Fernley, but said she could not fly with her mistress, though she promised to "tyar kerow," "to make ready," the buggy. The old woman's son had charge of this buggy, and of the horse trained to draw it : so from having often seen him harness the animal, she understood how to do so,—certainly a very providential circumstance.

They all made their way from the bungalow by the back premises, and going to the stables the ayah took out the buggy horse. Mrs. Fernley at first wished to harness her husband's second charger, for which she had a natural regard, or one of the carriage horses as being stronger, but the ayah, with great good sense, insisted upon using the horse that had always been trained to draw this conveyance. Quick as thought, but with fingers that trembled with eagerness, and with eyes

overflowing with tears, the faithful servant harnessed the buggy, and first lifting in the children, helped her kind mistress to ascend to the box. Just then shouts and the trampling of many horses were heard on the road to the right, leading from the direction of the parade ground. It was the savage soldiery of the Maharaja, with appetites whetted with the blood of their officers, and eager for more, even though it might be that of helpless women and children. The gate at the other end of the compound was open: raising a heavy whip, and giving the well-trained horse a smart slash across the quarters, and then throwing it in to her young mistress, the ayah stepped on one side as Mrs. Fernley, gathering the reins in her hand, guided the spirited and half-frightened animal through the broken ground of the compound and along the road to the left, the road that led to safety and to Gwalior, some seventy miles off. Our heroine was a very good whip, and it was well that she was possessed of this accomplishment. The exercise of driving rapidly, at all times having an exciting and exhilarating effect, now beneficially occupied her faculties, for otherwise her thoughts would have reverted to the sad circumstances under which she had been so suddenly made a widow, and to the terribly small chance there was of her being able to land her precious charge in safety in the British Residency of Gwalior.

With a heart bounding with fierce excitement, and scarce knowing what she did, she struck the highly bred horse and made him go faster and faster yet, but still the pace did not keep time with the wild throbbings of her brain, and she urged the noble beast into a hard gallop. She thought not of the consequences that might ensue

should the wheels of the buggy come in contact with any obstacles in the somewhat rough road ; her one thought was of flying from the assassins, whom she feared would give chase when they found that she had escaped from their clutches. At times her fancy induced her to believe that she could catch the distant sound as of hoofs in the rear, and again she felt convinced that the passing breeze brought the yells of her pursuers to her ears, and then she urged the horse by word and by whip to increased exertions. Her eldest child, Margaret by name, was recovering from an attack of measles, and was still in a weakly condition ; she was now in a state of great excitement, and though none of the party had tasted breakfast that morning beyond the "chota hazree," or cup of tea and biscuit, of which Anglo-Indians partake before the regular hot breakfast that follows some hours later, yet the child would not touch the wretched food her mother had brought, and asked only for water. The little boy was quite happy, and thoroughly enjoyed his ride, though he did not like the morning repast of dried gram, which he said he always gave his pony for his dinner. As to the unhappy infant, like all mortals of his tender age, he was giving vent to his complaints at the unaccountable neglect to which he was subjected, by screaming to the full extent his lungs would allow him, until at length he relapsed into an uneasy slumber, crying fitfully as his sense of hunger awoke him.

Margaret wetted some gram with water and put it to the child's lips, but he would have none of it. Now and then the fugitives passed some of the native peasantry, who stopped in their walk and stared after the singular vision of a white woman driving along a public road like one

possessed. Once they encountered something more to be dreaded than such casual wayfarers. As Mrs. Fernley was guiding the horse round a bend of the road, she narrowly escaped coming into collision with a sowar, who, with his horse covered with foam, was riding at hot haste from Gwalior in the direction of Seepree. His horse shot a long way in the rear before he could draw up ; after a moment's hesitation the trooper turned after the runaways, and giving spurs to his steed followed in hot pursuit. But his horse was fatigued, and, moreover, was not equal in strength to the highly-bred animal that was harnessed in the buggy,—poor Captain Fernley's besetting sin of extravagance in horse flesh was instrumental on this occasion in saving the lives of those he loved best. After a short pursuit Margaret, who had been directed by her mother to watch the proceedings of the sowar, reported that he was losing ground ; presently he stopped, and unslinging his short carbine, fired it after the English lady and her children in impotent wrath, and then turning his horse back pursued his journey to Seepree.

Such was the nature of the dangers that lay in the path of the brave Englishwoman, but she never allowed herself to dwell on them ; her heart never failed her even when she heard the rattle of the trooper's cavalry sabre : she merely urged the tired steed on the faster, and nerved herself to increased exertions. So hour passed after hour ; she began to feel very ill and faint, but fought against nature.

Making her daughter hold the reins for a few minutes, she took a mouthful of gram and a little water to keep up her fast-failing strength, and then reclined in the

bottom of the buggy for a few minutes, for a little rest was absolutely necessary to enable her to continue her exertions. She also took the opportunity of attending to the baby, who, she always used to say afterwards, was a great deal more dead than alive; at this juncture the horse bore the strain on his staying powers wonderfully, and though the sun poured down its rays with an intensity which only those who have been in the tropics can imagine, the noble beast tore along as if he knew on what errand of mercy he was bent, and would at least prove faithful to those who had treated him well in their days of prosperity. The buggy or light gig was admirably suitable for the purpose to which it was now put, and its well-made springs caused the wheels to bound over stones and other impediments in the road without the occurrence of any untoward accident. At length the long-wished-for domes and white buildings of Gwalior came into view, and the thought of the deliverance so near at hand infused fresh energy into the fugitives. It never occurred to the mind of Mrs. Fernley that the mutiny might have broken out here also; had the thought entered into her calculations she could hardly have borne up as she did. The Residency was reached in safety, and the party were received with open arms by the English officers, with their wives and children, who had taken refuge here under the solemn guarantee of the Maharaja, who promised to stand by his ancient allies, and protect them against all harm.

So passed a day or two, when the news reached the city of the mutiny of the troops at Seepree, and in other parts of the territories of Scindiah. Then the Maharaja sent a message to the Residency, warning the English

Political Resident that he could no longer engage to ensure the safety of the lives of his countrymen, as his troops showed signs of insubordination, and entreating all who had taken refuge at the Residency, and the European officers in his service who were still with their regiments, to seek safety in flight. There were Infantry and Artillery of the Gwalior Contingent stationed in the cantonments near the city, and the British officers attached to their corps declined to desert their posts until their men actually mutinied. The terrible sense of this impending danger hung over the refugees in the Residency like the naked sword suspended by a single horsehair over the head of Damocles, and kept them all in a fever of excitement. At length it descended upon their heads. It was on the night of Sunday, the 14th of June, that the troops of Scindiah mutinied and massacred seven of their officers. On the news reaching the Residency all the ladies were thrown into a state of the utmost consternation ; they immediately prepared to fly, but the question asked in agonized iteration and that received no answer, was, whither were they to bend their steps?

With trembling accents, they asked the messengers whether their husbands had fallen in the vain attempt of seeking to recall the mutinous soldiers to a sense of duty, and all was doubt and uncertainty, almost more agonizing to bear than the worst reality.

Some of the officers who escaped from the parade-ground, and managed to reach the Residency, encountered a series of the most singular escapes little short of miraculous. One of those who got away in safety wrote as follows of his mode of escape :—

"In the midst of the mutiny, after my horse had been shot, three sepoy caught hold of me and said they would try to save me. They threw off my hat, tore off my trousers and the remaining boot, covered me as well as they could with my horse-cloth, which my groom had brought, and, putting me between the two, the third walked in front along with us ; and what between knocking up one man's musket, whose bayonet was just at my back, and declaring I was one of their prizes, we got through all the sentries, and crossed the river. They then wanted me to make the best of my way off, saying that the chances were ten to one that my wife was killed by that time ; but I told them plainly that I would not try to escape without her. After a great deal of persuading they took me down the banks of the river (the opposite side of which was regularly lined with sentries to prevent escape) till we came opposite our house, where they set me down ; and one man said, now I will go and bring your wife to you, if she is alive ; so off he went, and, after about twenty minutes of the most agonizing suspense, dear M—— and I met again.

"My own guard at the house robbed the bearer of the money I gave him to do what he could for M—— ; her watch and chain, which she had in her hand, were taken from her also. I must say the three sepoy with us behaved splendidly. Seeing poor M—— was unable to walk, they tied my horse-cloth in a sort of bag fashion on to a musket, put her into it, and, placing the butt and muzzle on their shoulders, carried her in this way seven miles till we reached the Residency, by which time I could hardly put my feet to the ground from walking barefoot over the thorny ground."

A body of the artillery now approached the Resident's house, as the ladies were preparing to fly; and one of their officers, a Captain H——, who had been confined to his quarters that day through illness, forthwith determined to harangue his men, as, if he could not induce them to listen to reason, at least he might gain time for his countrymen to escape. He accordingly passed rapidly from his room, and, unseen by his wife, made his appearance on the verandah, and addressing in a commanding tone the mob of rabid soldiery, who, bearing torches, were preparing to enter the Residency, ordered them to listen to him their commanding officer. For a moment they were overawed by the singular daring of an unarmed officer seeking alone to check the tide of murder and rebellion, and they halted where they stood. At this time some one informed Mrs H—— that her husband was parleying with the mutinous sepoys. She rushed from out the barricaded room in which she had taken refuge, with her three young children clinging round her, and, springing forward to where her husband stood, implored him to return with her, as in another moment they would all be sacrificed. The noble woman, with the unselfishness of her sex, added, 'I shall die with you—I will never leave you!' It was an act worthy the mother of the Gracchi, or any of those heroines of ancient Rome or Greece who have won deathless renown.

The lofty resolve she expressed in the alternative offered to her high-spirited husband was the immediate precursor of the fate that awaited her. The brutal native artillerymen, awed for a moment by the commanding air of their old leader, raised a yell of hate, and, raising

their carbines, discharged a volley point blank at the group.

One would have thought that a sight so affecting as that presented by this exhibition of family devotion, and love true unto death, would have touched the heart even of the Bengal sepoy ; but those fiends in human shape were more relentless than the very tigers that dwell in their native jungles, and perpetrated massacres solely for the sake of indulging their lust for blood. When the smoke cleared away from the verandah it was seen that the cruel musketry had performed but too well its fatal mission. The father, mother, and three young children, all lay in one lifeless heap.

The order had gone forth from the leaders of the *émeute* that the women and female children were to be spared, while all of the opposite sex, including even male infants, were to be put to the sword. While this scene was enacting, it happened that as Mrs. Fernley was waiting for an opportunity to make her escape unseen, her little boy, three years of age, ran from her side ; the poor child, indeed, was in such a state of alarm and bewilderment that he did not know what he was doing. For a moment she did not miss him. He ran out into the verandah just after the massacre of Captain H—— and his family, and at sight of him a yell arose from the rebel horde, who were climbing into the building from all sides. Almost immediately afterwards a volley of several shots was fired at him as he ran distractedly about, but, singular to relate, he was not touched by the murderous bullets. But he had not yet escaped all danger. A brawny Golundauze rushed after the innocent child, and, seizing him, was about

to cut him down with his short artillery sword, when a cry was raised, 'Leave it alone, the child is a girl.' Disengaging his hand from the long, fair locks which, trained with a mother's loving care, hung down the babe's neck and shoulders, the assassin allowed the boy to fly into the darkness without any further let or hindrance. Thus, owing to the long locks, the pretty child escaped almost by a miracle, and is now, we believe, serving in that army in which his father died a soldier's death. The boy ran to his mother, and she, taking advantage of a moment when the way seemed clear, darted out into the compound and ran for her life. At first she ran she scarce knew whither, but, having got clear of the town, took the direction of the road that leads to Agra, which was some ninety miles from Gwalior.

Agra was, in those dreadful days, the chief city of refuge to all English fugitives, not only in the North-west Provinces, but from other parts. There is a very strong fort here, and it had been well provisioned and garrisoned on the first intimation of the outbreak at Meerut coming to the general's ears. During nearly the whole of '57, and until the country was cleared of rebels, and a strong convoy could be spared to escort the ladies and children down to Calcutta, this fort was filled with these helpless non-combatants. Mrs. Fernley, carrying the infant, proceeded on her way in the darkness as fast as the children could walk ; but after the lapse of an hour the younger child complained of being tired, and cried for rest. She crept with them into an old disused hut by the wayside, which, though a miserable hovel, afforded them at least shelter. The night was warm, but not unpleasantly so, and the children soon fell into a deep

sleep, nestling by her side. Her thoughts were too much occupied to allow of her sleeping, but at length she began to doze. While in this state of semi-wakefulness she heard some people passing along the highway. Rousing herself she listened with anxiety, so as if possible to catch their conversation. What was her joy on hearing her native tongue! She bent forward to make sure, and to seek to identify the wayfarers. Already they had passed the hut, when, in eager tones, she called after them in English, and ran out. The party stopped, when she found that it consisted of two officers, three officers' wives, all widows like herself, and five children. The officers were armed with revolvers, and one of them was wounded in the left arm, but, like gentlemen holding the Queen's commission, they both expressed their determination to remain with the ladies and children, and to escort them to Agra, and welcomed Mrs. Fernley and her little ones as if they had been an acquisition to their strength instead of a source of weakness.

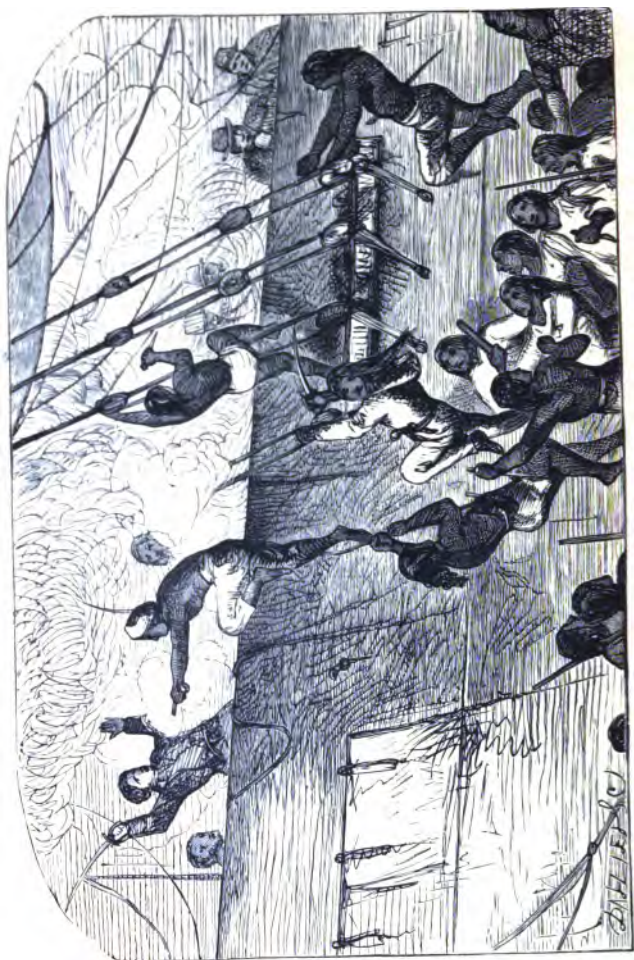
The whole party proceeded on for an hour, one of the gentlemen carrying the little boy, until they arrived at a copse of trees, where they rested, while the officers proceeded on a foraging expedition; that is, to beg, borrow, or steal anything they could lay their hands on in the way of eatables or drinkables. They soon came back with three goats, which were browsing near; these supplied milk for the children, who were all crying for food. A kid was killed, and a portion of its flesh broiled on a fire for the adults. After partaking of this, the fugitives proceeded on their way, keeping along the open country, and avoiding the roads for fear of meeting the insurgent cavalry, who were probably scouring them for

Europeans. They passed a few villagers, who stared after them ; but as the mutiny was almost entirely confined to the military, there was not the same danger attending this line of route, not but that any of the natives they passed might have given information to the soldiers thirsting for the Feringhee's blood.

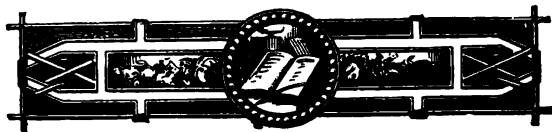
Towards mid-day they again halted, for the sun's rays rendered marching impossible, as the poor children were very footsore, and complained greatly, while the ladies were overcome with fatigue. In this manner they journeyed on for nearly a week, and at length the fort of Agra was signalled. How the party managed to perform the journey Mrs. Fernley could never minutely describe, for every mile of the way brought its attendant suffering. The heat during the day was intense, so that they had to rest between ten and four, proceeding on the march until eight, when they generally again halted. But heat was not the only enemy against which these delicately-nurtured women had to struggle. They encountered heavy rains ; on one occasion it poured pitilessly for thirty-six hours, their clothes were wet through, and the scorching rays of the mid-day sun blistered their bodies until they became the most pitiable objects. Then they had to ford rivers on their route, and the water flowed up to the shoulders of the ladies as they waded through one stream, while the children had to be carried across. But this was not all. There were constant alarms of an approaching enemy, so that the ladies were harassed day and night in mind as well as body. Clothed in their wretched rags they struggled on, and one and all bore their sufferings nobly and almost uncomplainingly. The supply of food was most scanty, and some days they were

almost entirely without anything to stay the pangs of hunger. For twenty-four hours Mrs. Fernley and her children had only one water-melon between them, and her daughter, who was in indifferent health, fainted repeatedly on the road from weakness and insufficiency of food. The two British officers sometimes went on foraging excursions ; leaving their charges in some secure halting-place, they would solicit food from the ryots or small proprietors of the soil, offering at the same time money in payment. On one occasion they had to resort to a threat of violence before the natives would consent to bargain with a white man ; however, the muzzle of the revolver soon brought them to look on the transaction apart from all political considerations, and as a mere question of barter.

Through all their many and grievous sufferings the protection of the Divine providence was over them, and the party, with the single exception of one infant, who expired on the road from natural causes, reached the protecting shelter of the strong walls of the fort of Agra. They found it filled with a crowd of officers' and soldiers' wives and children, who had taken refuge in it from different stations higher up the river, fortunate indeed in having found a shelter from the barbarities that were subsequently perpetrated upon their brothers and sisters at Futtyghur, at Cawnpore, and at many other stations that have acquired for all time an evil reputation as places accursed by the stain of innocent blood.



The Ship's Carpenter's Yarn.



THE SHIP'S CARPENTER'S YARN.

OF the four tribes of pirates which, when the present century was young, desolated the shores of the Persian Gulf, and harried the merchant vessels that traded in its narrow inland waters, the Jowassamee were the most powerful and the most rapacious. Perhaps, before relating, as told to me, the yarn of the ship's carpenter of H.M. corvette *Scindia*, a few words regarding the piratical hordes which infested the gulf may be desirable.

In the year 1808, when the occurrences herein narrated took place, the trade of the Persian Gulf had almost been annihilated by four distinct Arab tribes, known as the Jowassamee, the Beni As, the Menasir, and the Mahama. They formed a powerful combination for evil in those days, and, after defeating all attempts at extermination by their more peaceful neighbours, notably the Sultan of Muscat, whose fleet they destroyed and whom they slew in a great naval engagement, their chiefs had the temerity to measure swords with British

power, as represented by the East India Company, and in consequence came, of course, to signal grief. It is not of this dolorous end, however, that I now purpose to write. As an example of the strength of the Jowasamee, I may instance that when the last estimate of their numbers was made, though much reduced since the days of their pristine greatness, it was placed at 19,650 males, capable of bearing arms, with 1,500 vessels, varying in size from 10 to 400 tons. With these they now carry on the pearl fisheries on the banks off the island of Bahrein ; but in the good old time, they made a habit, during the interval between the pearl-fishing seasons, of employing this enormous flotilla in the less creditable occupation of piracy. Their ships not only swept the Persian Gulf, but infested the southern shores of Arabia, and, making their way through Bab-el-Mandeb, the "Gate of Tears," sank and captured many a noble argosy, freighted with the wealth of Inde and of Araby the Blest. There was a considerable trade at that time between Bombay and Bussorah, and it was carried on in a great measure under the English flag. Moore, in his beautiful Eastern romance of *Lalla Rookh*, speaks of the great staple of exports from the latter place.

" And Basra dates and apricots,
Seed of the sun from Iran's land."

The description of apricots exported from Persia was known in that country by a word signifying "seed of the sun." At the present day it is hard to realize the fact, that this ancient city of Bussorah had, until recently, an extensive trade with India ; for the canals which lead up to the city from the Shatt-el-Arab are, owing to neglect,

scarcely navigable for boats of the smallest tonnage. In 1808, the Jowassamee and other piratical tribes preyed upon this trade, and it will scarcely be credited that no steps were taken by the Government of Bombay to arrest the freebooters in their course of murder and rapine. At length the event occurred which was narrated to me many years afterwards by the carpenter of H.M.S. *Scindia*. It was the last straw that proverbially breaks the back of the camel, and it created such a sensation in Bombay, and caused so great a stir among all classes of the Indian community, that the authorities were forced to fit out an expedition, which in the following year took an ample revenge on the perpetrators of the outrage.

"Gentlemen," said the carpenter,—Pennell, by name,—addressing a group of officers, myself among the number, who had solicited the old warrant-officer to spin the yarn in question,—“Gentlemen, in the year 1808, I was, though only a youth of twenty, ship's carpenter of a merchantman called the *Minerva*, which traded between Bombay and Bussorah. She was the property of Mr. Manesty, the political resident of the East Indian Company at the latter place, a gentleman who owned many vessels, and had previously lost some of them under similar circumstances to those under which the ill-fated *Minerva* passed out of his hands. Our commander was a man of the name of Hopegood. He was a very experienced seaman, and one of the bravest men I ever knew. The history of his life, replete as it was with hair-breadth escapes and almost unparalleled dangers by sea and land, would have made the most thrilling and sensational of three-volume novels; but, like the generality of brave men, he was withal most modest, and never spoke of the

manly virtues he had exhibited not only on a ship's deck, slippery with gore, during many a hard-fought action in the great war, but—and this is a more terrible ordeal than battle—on many a wreck, on a lee shore, at the fearful hour when the one plank that separates the seaman from death is crumbling away beneath his feet, or under the rapid advances of the most terrible of all elements, fire, or in an open boat, or frail raft, far, far out of sight of land, and with little hope of succour from human aid.

“It is in such extremities of mortal trial that the courage and fortitude of any man are put to the severest test, for where no public voice or eye can applaud the hero who passes triumphantly through them, the great human incentive to deeds of enterprise, the applause of our fellows, no longer exists to urge one to noble actions; yet, through the white heat of such an alembic of adversity, Captain Hopegood—well was he named so—came out unscathed as to his moral virtue in like manner as the rarest of metals, when tested by the assayer in the furnace, issues therefrom thrice purified. Such was the man who commanded the *Minerva*, when I shipped on board of her at Bombay, as carpenter. It was my first voyage at sea, but I knew something about ships, having been employed on them when in dock, and at odd jobs when lying in port. All went merry as a marriage-bell, until our arrival in the Persian Gulf. We had passed safely through the Straits of Ormuz, and were passing the small island of Kenn, which, as you know, is situated not far from the Persian shore. It was early morning, with a pleasant, light breeze, and the ship was making progress through the water at the rate of about three

knots an hour, when a number of large bugalas were seen in sight; and, from the direction in which they were heading, we soon gathered that they were chasing us. Now, every man on board the *Minerva* knew what to expect, were she captured by the pirates of the Gulf, no matter from which of the four tribes they might hail. All hands were at once turned up on deck by order of the captain, who, the moment he saw the bugalas, divined their errand. Captain Hopegood looked very grave, as he glanced up aloft at the dog-vane, and noted the light breeze that scarcely filled the sails, which flapped uneasily against the masts and rigging, as the merchantman rose and fell on the long swell. All sail was at once 'loosed,' and the ship made better way through the water; but yet we had no hope, with the present strength of wind, of leaving behind the pirate craft, which were crowding all sail in pursuit of us, like a hungry pack of wolves chasing a sledge on the snowy steppes of Russia. It would never do for Englishmen to give up the game of life, even if we could not escape from the clutches of the cruel enemy. If die we must, our gallant captain resolved, with the acquiescence of every one fore and aft, that we should fall like brave men, with arms in our hands, even though 'facing fearful odds.' The bugalas slowly neared us like a cruel fate; there could be no doubt of the fact, and the most sanguine began to think all would soon be lost. The *Minerva* carried two guns, 12-pounders, and there were plenty of men on board who could work them; the captain himself was an old man-o'-war's man, and many of our crew had also served in the Royal and Indian navies. These 'turned to' with a will. The magazine below

was opened, and all the powder was passed up, together with round shot. Alas ! it was not much. There were but thirty rounds for both guns. It was necessary, therefore, that great care should be taken in their expenditure ; not a shot must be thrown away.

“Our caution was quickly put to a severe test. About three o'clock the enemy had crept so near that they began to open fire upon us ; they soon got our range, as was evidenced by some shot falling close under our stern. Soon one of these iron messengers crashed through the ship's stern. Captain Hopegood thought it high time to reply, if only to show them that we were not defenceless. The two guns, therefore, each fired a couple of rounds ; and then, the fact being patent that we were not destitute of teeth, the muzzles were clapped on, and we did not deign to reply further to the barking of the ugly curs astern of us. They fired a few more shots, but did not attempt to board, not being, as we supposed, quite certain of our strength. So passed the afternoon, and evening at length gave place to night, without any change in the tactics of the foe. An anxious look-out was kept upon them all the long, dreary hours of that night, but they still were no farther and no nearer. We did not know what all this meant. It appeared as if they were afraid to board. We were beginning to entertain hopes that a breeze might spring up, and so relieve us from the painful state of uncertainty in which we existed. The pirates, after what seemed like a consultation, again commenced to fire on us ; and then, as the breeze, instead of increasing, began to die away, closed on the *Minerva*. The crisis would soon arrive. Now all the firearms had been passed up on deck and distributed

among those who could use them, while the few cutlasses in the armoury were given to the rest of the men, myself among the number. Captain Hopegood decided on giving the enemy a further taste of his 12-pounders, and accordingly ten more rounds were expended with good effect, for three of the bugalas were hard hit, the shot going right through their flimsy sides, while the mast of another one was shot away. Still they advanced; and as there were five vessels as yet untouched, the state of affairs became critical. No more rounds could be discharged, for there were less than twenty cartridges remaining, and the captain desired to reserve them for the actual boarding. He accordingly desisted from broad-side firing, and the small-arm men were mustered, ready to open with musketry as soon as they approached sufficiently near. We had already suffered somewhat, for not only had our rigging and sails been a good deal cut about by the enemy's shot, but two of our men had been killed, and three were wounded by the splinters from a missile that shivered the longboat stowed inboard amidships. Just then, when we were preparing for the final struggle, for the pirates seemed determined to board, a breeze sprang up. How our hopes rose at this happy turn of affairs. It soon became apparent that we were in reality drawing ahead of our opponents. A cheer broke from among us; but our joy was premature, and was destined to be short-lived. The favourable breeze indeed, at first freshened, and there was every probability that, did matters not alter in this respect, before nightfall we should make good our escape. In order to shake off our pursuers, and prevent the possibility of an unlucky shot carrying away or disabling

one of the masts or spars, and so leaving us at their mercy, Captain Hopegood again commenced firing upon the piratical bugalas with his great guns. Soon the few remaining rounds of shot were fired from the great guns. Hardly had the last cartridge been burnt, than the breeze died away as suddenly as it had sprung up, and we were left in a state of comparative defencelessness. Blank dismay seized on the crew of the *Minerva* at the unexpected turn affairs had taken, and there were symptoms that the men wished to haul the flag down and surrender. Captain Hopegood, seeing this, exhorted them not to give up all hope of making a successful defence, and warned them that they need expect no mercy at the hands of the Jowassamee in the event of being captured by them. For his part, he said, he would fight till the death, and he prayed his men, as British seamen, to do likewise. The answer to his appeal was what might have been expected. All hesitation to continue the unequal struggle at once ceased, and the crew of the *Minerva* stood, with their weapons in their hands, waiting for death ; but determined to sell their lives dearly, and die like brave men.

“ Unhappily there was one lady on board, and it was pitiful to see the horror expressed on her young and fair face as she learnt the dreadful intelligence that all hope of a favourable issue was well nigh lost. The poor creature was a Mrs. Taylor, an Armenian by birth, and the wife of Lieutenant Taylor, an officer in the Company's service, and had taken her passage on board the *Minerva* with the object of joining her husband at Bus-sorah. Even now the pirates seemed not to like the look of us, and instead of boarding, which they could

have done during the latter part of the afternoon, 'backed and filled' about us in an undecided sort of way. So another night came on, and we found ourselves in the same dreadful position; the suspense was almost more difficult to bear than the worst fate that could befall us, and most of our brave fellows were longing for the momentous struggle which would decide the destiny of all hands on board the *Minerva*. This second night passed away without any change in the position of affairs. There were many false alarms that the enemy were steering for us; but such was not the case. There they were, when evening darkened rapidly into night, a squadron of seven large bugalas,—with the eighth, whose mast was shot away, almost out of sight below the horizon,—and when the gray light of early morning broke, we looked around for our unrelenting foe; there they lay in the same spot, waiting to pounce upon their prey. The native craft had been able thus to keep up their relative positions on both quarters by simply slackening off, or 'flattening in,' their main sheets, and, owing to the very light airs and their superior speed under such conditions, this enabled them to choose their mode and time of attack.

"The Jowassamee had apparently, like ourselves, expended all the ammunition of their great guns, so that the matter would have to be decided by boarding, if at all. How we prayed for a breeze, for a gale, for a hurricane, for death in any form rather than thus by slow torture; but an all-wise Providence had decreed not only that it should be otherwise, but that we should be tantalized at first by vain hope, and then tortured by the knowledge of what must be our ultimate fate. The early

hours of morning dragged slowly by. Some few slept, while the others kept watch on the motions of the seven large bugalas, with their lofty chunam-washed sides. Many eager glances were turned upwards, and to the horizon, where, like the old prophet in the Scriptures, we prayed earnestly for the appearance of the cloud no larger than a man's hand ; but scarce a passing zephyr stirred the ship's sails, and not a shadow of a sign could the most sanguine descry of an approaching wind. The vault of heaven was a deep azure blue, and the sun poured its fierce rays with a directness and power upon our heads that added to our sufferings. There was no hope there, there was no hope anywhere, and we clutched our weapons with the energy of despair. Not much longer were we to wait for the long-expected end. A cry was suddenly raised that the pirates had flattened in their main sheets, and were all steering for us. Every man sprang up and rushed to the side to satisfy his own mind : there could be no doubt of it, for their decks were alive with exultant warriors, and the air was rendered resonant with shouts of triumph and battle-songs, which sounded as the death-chant of us, the men of the *Minerva*. The crisis had at length come, and though it was felt that it must be the last hour of some, if not of all of us, the news was received with a sense of relief.

"I will pass over the time occupied in closing, it seemed like hours to us. By means of some large sweeps they managed to range up alongside in a body, one on each quarter, one on each bow, and one on each side amidships, with the seventh waiting to dash in where most needed. Our crew and officers only mustered

thirty-two souls, and as each pirate vessel contained double that number of men, there could be no doubt as to what the result must be. Through it all, during the long agony of two days' suspense, and now, when the hour for action and death had come, Captain Hopegood had been foremost in every duty, and was now to be seen encouraging his men to one last act of valour, and then, to meet their end calmly. His voice died away, and for a few moments a solemn silence reigned on board ; then he gave an order to open fire upon the advancing craft, and the sharp rattle of musketry broke upon the stillness. The small stock of ammunition we had on board was soon expended. Presently the bugalas struck the *Minerva*, and then our decks were flooded with a crowd of armed men : over the sides they came vaulting, filling the air with their cries, brandishing their swords and matchlocks overhead. Captain Hopegood seemed to be everywhere, encouraging his officers and men by example ; he sought death, but, though covered with wounds, seemed to bear a charmed life. The resistance was short, for our people were borne down, and into the water overboard, by the mere weight of numbers. We had scarcely a chance even of offering resistance. Contrary to our expectation the pirates did not put us to the sword at once ; but any hope this fact might have inspired was soon banished. As for myself, I had been knocked senseless early in the struggle, and when I awoke to consciousness, I found that all was over, and the enemy in possession of the ship. Eight of the men and the two mates had either been killed while offering resistance, or had been knocked overboard, and put out of their misery while swimming about alongside, like so

many water-rats. The gallant commander had been captured, and now lay bound on the deck, and bleeding from numerous ghastly wounds. It had been his great desire to die sword in hand, and not to fall alive into the cruel hands of the pirates, but his wish was not granted to him, and he, like so many of his men, was destined 'to be butchered to make a holiday' for our savage captors.

"Thus fell into the hands of the Jowassamee the *Minerva*, one of many ships that they captured in that ill-omened year. The darkest hour, they say, comes before the dawn, and, truth to say, nothing could be worse than the condition into which the Persian Gulf had fallen at that time; but the dawn was nigh at hand, and before the year 1809 closed, the blood-thirsty pirates, the Jowassamee, tasted at the sword's point some of the bitter sufferings they had so long inflicted on their unoffending victims, both European and native. We were not long in gathering a knowledge of the fate that was in store for us. After a consultation among the chiefs the order was given to clear the ship, and then they set to work fumigating and purifying the decks with water and perfumes. At first we were at a loss to comprehend what was meant by this solemn ceremonial, but in a few minutes all doubt was removed from our minds.

"From certain sharpening of knives, similar to those with which native butchers dispatch cattle, it was without doubt intended to immolate us as a sacrifice to the religion of Abd-ul-Wahab, whose tenets they, the Jowassamee, had lately embraced, and whose behests, like zealous converts, they strictly carried out. Some of them

then seized Captain Hopegood, and, carrying him to the gangway, put him to death with the most barbarous cruelty. I will not afflict you with a detailed account of the sufferings of the unhappy gentleman, or with particulars of the refined tortures under which he at length expired. Suffice it to say that they cut him into small pieces, and this they did out of revenge for the gallant and protracted resistance he had made. When this was done, they took my other shipmates, and deliberately cutting their throats at the gangway, offered them up to their gods, with all the solemnity of a religious rite. One by one, each individual was bound and sacrificed, the butchers exclaiming at the same time, 'Allah Ackbar !' (God is great), which is the expression they always employ when slaughtering cattle. So the bloody feast of death, the propitiatory sacrifice to their prophet, proceeded, until, of all the Europeans, only Mrs. Taylor and myself remained alive."

"And how did you escape?" some of us asked.

"Before the wholesale massacre commenced, the chief of the pirates inquired of a native servant on board, which of the crew was a carpenter, and, on my being pointed out, my life was spared, as it was thought I could be of use to them. Mrs. Taylor was also saved, for, to do these blood-thirsty Arabs but justice, not only do they abstain from killing women in such cases as the present, but the honour of all females captured by them is safe in their keeping. There is, therefore, one redeeming trait in their character; any departure from this rule of conduct would have brought down upon offenders the deep hatred and contempt of all neighbouring Arab tribes. A crew was put on board the *Minerva*,

and we were taken to Ras-al-Khaimah, their chief town, and there held in captivity. I was employed in ship-building work, and through my experience in the Bombay dockyard, I was of great service to my captors. I was treated very harshly, and had scarce enough food to keep life in me. My first job was to fit up the *Minerva* for carrying guns as a seagoing cruiser. This I did ; and then she was despatched to cruise about the Persian Gulf, as a twenty-gun ship, and her crew were very successful in their depredations. The lady, Mrs. Taylor, was, after a detention of six months, released from captivity on the payment of a heavy ransom, by Mr. Bruce, the political agent of the company at Bushire. As for myself, I languished in the pirate stronghold till the following year, when a combined military and naval expedition from Bombay effected my release 'vi et armis.'"

Perhaps at some future time I may give an account of the little known, but successful capture of Ras-al-Khaimah ; for as an undertaking that shed some lustre on British arms in that remote corner of the globe, the telling of it, unlike many other "oft-told tales" of Anglo-Saxon prowess, might with advantage bear repetition. In conclusion I have to say that I have related only facts ; I have even recorded correctly the names of the ship and the "dramatis personæ" of the tragic drama, including that of the narrator of "The Ship's Carpenter's Yarn."



THE CAPTAIN OF THE AFTER- GUARD'S YARN.

READER, allow me to introduce to you the "Captain of the After-guard" of the Hon. E. I. Co.'s Ship *Bonassus*, on board of which I served now nearly twenty years ago. To the uninitiated I ought to explain that the Captain of the After-guard on board a man-of-war is a petty officer who has charge of the seamen not stationed in any of the "tops," or the "forecastle," and whose duties attach them to the "after," or stern part of the ship. So much for the honest fellow's rating on the ship's books. Let me picture him to you as he stood before me while "spinning his yarn." James Spencer is a broad-built athletic seaman, "rising six feet," with a thick light beard and whiskers, having just perhaps a suspicion of gray in them, within which is set, as in a frame, his open manly jovial-looking countenance. A word as to his "rig." His frock is of the whitest duck, except the collar, which is blue, bordered with white tape; it is thrown open and fully displays his muscular throat,

and the clean flannel underneath that covers his manly chest. A black silk necktie lies under the broad collar, and is fastened low down in front in a sailor's knot. On his frock or "jumper" is beautifully worked by himself (for he can use his needle as deftly as he handles his cutlass), his initials, "J. S.,"—as a hint maybe to loafers and others who might appropriate his property. The trousers are of blue cloth, very "taut" round the waist, and fitting to the figure without a wrinkle or seam, while below the knee they flow in loose and graceful folds; they are fastened behind with a bunch of blue ribbons, passed through neatly sewed "eyelet" holes, for Jack would as soon wear stays as "braces," or "topping lifts," as he would call them. Clean are his white socks as any gentleman need wish, for your true man-o'-war's man has been trained in the service to habits of cleanliness, and hates dirty linen; and his feet are encased in light shoes, so that he can "spring his luff" up aloft should he be required to lay out on the main yard. Let's glance now at his head gear. The brave fellow takes a seaman's pride in a large glossy ringlet that lays on his noble bronzed forehead. [N.B.—His father before him, in the "mighty Nelson's" day, used to affect pig-tails; it was the only affectation he had, unless thrashing Frenchmen whenever and wherever he encountered them may be considered in that light. His descendant, yielding to modern progress, has compromised with society by betaking himself to his curled forelock.] Jack Spencer as he stands before you has "clapped"—I can use no other descriptive phrase better calculated to denote the manual action by which he half throws and half slaps down on the back of his sconce—I beg his pardon, his "figure head"—the thick plaited

white straw hat, with the ample brim turned up all round, and adorned by a broad black ribbon having the ship's name printed on it in large letters of gold, and with the ends hanging in streamers half way down his back. Such is his *tout ensemble*.

In my humble opinion, though perhaps I may be considered a prejudiced person, there is no dress at once so picturesque, manly, and serviceable as that worn by our gallant tars, and which I have just attempted to describe. When he musters in his Sunday, or "liberty rig," he wears a blue jacket with tight sleeves, having gilt buttons on them, and a row of the same on each side in front; but I prefer to set him before you in his work-a-day dress. And now let the good fellow—who has been standing some time for our inspection—spin his yarn.

"In the year 1808 I entered the naval service of the Hon E. I. Company as a ship's boy. When I joined the guardship in Bombay harbour I was only ten years of age. I was an orphan, having lost my father, who had also been in the service, and my mother who had been dead some years; having, therefore, no home to go to, and longing for a life of adventure, I entered myself in the Company's service. It so happened that at the time of my joining, a squadron was fitting out to escort Sir Harford Jones, who was proceeding on a political mission from the Indian Government to the court of Persia. I do not remember the names of all the ships—it was only a small squadron—but I can recollect that the Commodore was an officer of the name of Corbett, and that he hoisted his broad pennant on board a six-and-thirty gun frigate called the *Nereid*. You will soon learn the very sufficient reason why I have never forgotten the name of the Commodore

and of his ship. I was at once ordered on board the *Sylph*, a small brigantine of not more than 100 tons, and carrying eight guns, all six or nine pounder carronades. The day after I joined her, the squadron sailed for the Gulf, and the little *Sylph* went as one of the number. It seemed as if the genius of ill luck accompanied us, for hardly had we cleared the harbour than one of the foretopmen, employed aloft on the topsail-yard, lost his hold, and, falling on to the deck, was instantly killed. I was close to the spot when he fell; and, as it was the first time I had seen a man meet a violent end, it made me feel sick. The appearance the poor fellow presented as he fell a mangled corpse at my feet often haunted me in my sleep, until at length it was dispelled by still greater horrors.

Well, we had a fine breeze up to Ras-el-Jebel, or Cape of the Hills, as the Arabs call Cape Mussendom, which, as you know, is the great headland that forms the eastern extremity of Arabia. We then passed in company through the Straits of Ormuz, still with a fair wind, but hardly had the squadron entered the Persian Gulf than the wind chopped round, and a gale began to blow right in our teeth. 'Ah,' said some of our old hands, 'we are going to have a taste of one of the old Gulf's "nor'-westers,"' And, true enough, we did have such a good taste that I have never forgotten the flavour. It does blow up there, as you well know, sir, none better," added the man-o'-war's man meditatively, and nodding his head slowly, as if comparing the comparative forces of the "stormy winds" he had encountered during his forty years' nautical experience in various climes. "It blew hard for a week, and on the second day we had lost sight of the entire squadron. When the nor'-wester showed

signs of hauling off, and we were able to set a little canvass on the brigantine, not a sail was in sight. A sharp look out was now kept, not only for one of our ships, but also for any piratical craft. In those days the Persian Gulf was infested with pirates. The Coast to the south of Ras Mussendom was actually, and is still to this day, called the 'pirate coast,' and so greatly had this plague of piracy increased in those waters, that the trade in native vessels was almost annihilated.

"It will scarcely be credited in these days, when expeditions have been fitted out in England, and sent out to Borneo to root out piracy in its strongholds, that the Bombay Government, under orders of the Court of Directors at home, had issued peremptory instructions to the officers of the Indian navy that they were not to attack or *molest* piratical vessels on any account, and were only to fire a gun in self-defence, after having been first fired upon. Indeed, an officer who had shortly before in the most gallant manner driven off a superior force of pirate vessels who were about to attack his ship in open day, was seriously reprimanded, and held up to opprobrium. In general orders, the Indian navy was warned that a repetition of the act would entail dismissal on the offenders.

"Not a sail was sighted of any sort until the island of Kenn, on the Persian coast of the Gulf, appeared on the horizon: At the same moment that the look-out-man hailed the deck with the announcement of the island being in sight right ahead, he added the unwelcome news that two Arab dhows were standing towards us, about two points on the port bow. The *Sylph* was close-hauled to the wind, while the strangers came down upon her

with the wind right aft, and with all their canvass belling out in fair white fields. Directly Lieutenant Graham, our commander, saw these great vessels, each twice the tonnage of his little craft, he had his suspicions about their designs. All our crew were piped to quarters, the guns were cast loose, the magazine opened, and the arms passed up from below. Soon our preparations for the conflict, which was pretty generally apprehended to be imminent, were complete, and then we watched the dhows as they neared us rapidly, the foam breaking over their bows as they plunged into the 'short sea,' still tumbling about with the uneasy troubled motion that is peculiar to the ocean after a heavy gale. All our doubts would soon be at rest, and not a seaman on board the *Sylph* but was rejoiced in the prospect of a fight with pirates; the greater accuracy of our practice with the carronades would counterbalance, it was considered, the enormous numerical superiority of the enemy, and then, after cutting up the rigging and thus disabling them, we could either sink the pair at our leisure or carry them by boarding, should we desire it. Such was the view of the matter taken by the gallant tars as I gathered it from the mouths of the older hands.

"But what made Lieutenant Graham, our young and brave commander, look so pale and ill at ease? It was not fear, for he had a well-earned reputation in the service as a brave officer, and had saved the life of a seaman only a few days previously by jumping overboard at great personal risk. No, it was not the craven fear that haunts the heart of a coward and paralyzes him, body and soul in action; but it was the accursed 'instructions' which he had received from his superiors before sailing, and

the nature of which I have already described. He was in effect bound hand and foot for the slaughter. In the present instance, owing to the great superiority of the enemy in numbers and power, the salvation of his ship and all hands intrusted to his care rested in his ability to open fire *first*. The first broadside was everything, for if well directed it would in all probability cause the dhows to sheer off or would seriously cripple them. As an English officer, and for the honour of the flag, he dared not fly, and yet, if he wished to save his commission, he must not raise a hand to save himself from destruction, until perhaps it was too late. Was ever an officer placed in so fearful a predicament? During all this time of maddening doubt the Arab dhows came down on the wings of the wind like birds of prey, flying to gorge themselves on some hapless traveller whose hands were bound behind him. At the time I did not know his reasons for abstaining to commence the action, and the crew, attributing it to an error of judgment, wondered, though they obeyed him implicitly and reserved their fire.

"A few minutes of agonizing suspense passed; not a gun was fired on either side; Lieutenant Graham obeyed his instructions to the letter, and it seemed as though the pirates knew what these were. The dhows passed within gun-shot, within pistol-shot, within the throw of a biscuit. Oh! but for one broadside of the carronades, which, from their construction, were peculiarly fitted for dealing destruction at close quarters; but their voices were silent, and their iron mouths were struck dumb as with paralysis. Boy as I was, I saw something was wrong, and watched with horror the near approach of the great dhows, with their white chunam-washed hulls, in which

I could see a dense horde of fierce looking cut-throats—pirates from the renowned stronghold of Ras-al-Khaimah.

“There was a terrific shock as the Arab craft struck the *Sylph*, one on the bow and the other on the quarter, while almost at the same instant our decks were covered with the swarthy mob. It was too late now to use the guns; while the sailors, hardly recovered from their astonishment at the appalling turn affairs had taken, found themselves overpowered, and fighting, not for glory, but for existence. I saw the small band of devoted seamen rally round their chief, himself at once their betrayer and betrayed by the suicidal orders issued by the Board of Directors sitting in Leadenhall Street, 10,000 miles away. The fray was short, and could have but one result. The murderous gang of stalwart Arabs poured in a twofold flood over the confined decks of the brigantine, and, solely by the weight of their onset, overwhelmed the band of Englishmen. These, animated by their officers, strove, by almost superhuman efforts, to break through the crowd of savages, but it was like combating against a stormy sea. A general massacre ensued. I found myself hurled down the fore-hatch, which was open, on to the lower deck, where two other sailors were lying half-stunned.

“Diving down through a small opening in the lower deck, the covering of which we quickly removed, we secreted ourselves in a small store-room, which opened with a sliding door. The store-room was almost under the forefoot of the ship, and I could hardly breathe in the stifling atmosphere: the space was so confined also that my companions and myself quickly threw out some of the stores to make a little more room; as we had re-

placed the small hatch in the lower deck, there was no occasion to keep the sliding door shut. We had scarcely been down there a minute when we heard a heavy fall overhead on to the hatch, and then a groan. Concluding it was one of our countrymen, one of my comrades went up to the opening, and asked in a cautious undertone, who was there. A feeble voice at once replied, 'It is I, your captain.' With some difficulty the hatch was again moved on one side, and Lieutenant Graham was lifted down. The unfortunate officer was covered with wounds, and it seemed impossible that he could live many hours. We did all in our power to stanch the flow of blood, and placed him in a sitting posture in the store-room. Every moment we expected that the pirates would commence to search the ship, for the comparative silence overhead told us they were masters of the *Sylph*.

"Too well we knew what our fate would be as soon as they discovered us, for the pirates of Ras-al-Khaimah made a practice of putting to death all captives. The ghastly mode of execution was, doubtless, going on now above, for we could distinguish shouts of glee, as if the victors were witnessing some agreeable spectacle. You may conceive my feelings all this time. I prayed to Heaven for mercy, and waited with a beating heart for the end. I was only a child, and life was full of charms to me, while it was certain that nothing short of a miracle could work our delivery, for the pirates would either take the *Sylph* to Ras-al-Khaimah or else loot and then set fire to her at sea. We could hear them swinging the yards as they trimmed the brigantine's sails, and now and then we thought we could distinguish a scream of some wretch in his agony. So passed an hour. At

length suddenly the sound was heard of many feet rushing to and fro on the upper deck. What could it all mean? Were they about to search the hold, or—and a slight gleam of hope flashed like a ray of sunshine on a stormy sea over our despairing hearts—could it be deliverance from some quarter? The noise increased; the pirates appeared to be making more sail on the little craft. A short time of intense mental anxiety elapsed, when to our rapturous delight the boom of a distant gun clanged on our ears. Rescue from a cruel death was at hand, and we all, even the half-dying lieutenant, poured out from our hearts a prayer of thankfulness to the Almighty. Soon another gun thundered with its majestic note over the summer sea; then a third; each time the sound drew nearer, and the solitary reports increased to a brisk cannonade. We were startled at last by a round shot that smashed through the ship's side over our heads and quite close to us. A few minutes more elapsed; we ventured out of our place of concealment, and, approaching the small hatch, slightly lifted it, so as to listen better. Hurrah! the pirates were leaving the ship, and we were safe. Of course we remained in our place of concealment, until soon after we were overjoyed at hearing once more the well-known accents of the English tongue. We were free! Throwing up the covering of the small lower deck hatch, we sprang up and found that our deliverers were the officers and crew of H.M.S. *Nereid*, Commodore Corbett in command; and that was the reason, sir," added the sailor, "why I never forgot the ship's name and that of her captain. A sight I shall never forget met our eyes as we stepped up once more on the upper deck, and breathed the pure air of heaven.

"Not a man on the ship's books of the brigantine had been left alive; the bloodthirsty miscreants had butchered all the survivors from the fight, before re-joining the dhows, on seeing escape was hopeless. The scuppers were still dripping with blood, and all the ropes and gear were saturated with the same. It was long before the fearful stain could be washed out of them. It was a melancholy satisfaction to know that not only had our shipmates been amply revenged, but that in the desperate hand-to-hand struggle, forty-seven at least of the enemy had fallen; for so many corpses could be counted cumbering up the narrow battle-ground where the unequal fight had raged.

"And, sir, let me add, in justice to the brave men of the *Sylph*, that these pirates always fought to the death; and though I have since been engaged with like vermin in Borneo, China, and elsewhere, none fought so desperately as those Wahabee fanatics, who lived solely by piracy.

"Well, the *Nereid* and the little *Sylph* chased the dhows; overtook them, and, within five hours of the time the pirates boarded us, we fired broadsides into them until we sank both of the rascally craft, with every soul on board. As to Lieutenant Graham, he recovered from his wounds, was tried by a court-martial for the loss of his ship, and was, of course, honourably acquitted, for he pleaded his 'instructions.' These were soon after abrogated; and then the gallant officers of the Indian navy took an ample revenge upon their treacherous foe, and sank, burnt, and destroyed their ships and crews without mercy. If that escape, sir, which is as true as gospel, is not miraculous, I should like to know what is—that's all."

"But, Spencer," said I, "how is it that the *Nereid* came up so opportunely?"

"Why, it seems, sir, that she lost her fore-topgallant-mast during the heavy nor-wester, and so lagged astern a little; the ships of the squadron having all lost sight of each other during the second night's gale, they made sail independently for Bushire Roads, according to instructions issued before starting. So it comes to this, sir: that if the *Nereid* had not lost her fore-topgallant-mast we should all have had our throats cut, and I shouldn't have been here spinning this 'Captain of the After-guard's Yarn.'"





THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BENI-ABU-ALI ARABS.

IN the completion of the final suppression of piracy in the Persian Gulf in the year 1820, a force of some eight hundred men was left at Ras-al-Khaimah, under the command of Captain Thompson, well known in England as the late General Peyronnet Thompson, M.P., of Radical notoriety.

Owing to constant sickness, this body of troops was gradually reduced in numbers until Captain Thompson applied to the Bombay Government for permission to remove to a more healthy locality.

This was granted, and the detachment was transferred to the island of Kishm on the opposite coast: Captain Thompson, at the same time, received specific instructions that he was to repel any renewal, on the part of the Jowassamee, of the acts of piracy that had drawn down upon their heads the chastisement of 1819; but he was instructed that such operations were to be confined to the sea-coast. Before entering into particulars of his abortive expedition against the Beni-Abu-Ali Arabs, it is necessary that I should define the country inhabited by that tribe, and the more so as, in the present day, they may be said almost to have ceased to exist.

The Beni-Boo-Ali, as they are called in old Indian Army Lists recounting the services of officers who served against them, or more properly the Beni-Abu-Ali, are a tribe who came originally from a small district in Nesjd. In 1811, they became converts to the faith of Abd-ul-Wahab, whose followers inculcated the new doctrines of their prophet at the point of the sword. They were always held in great fear by the neighbouring tribes of Oman, but managed to wage war single-handed against them all, including the then Sultan of Muscat, Sayyid Said, a potentate who, for more than forty years, was our faithful ally in the East. Their country is situated about Ras-al-Had, and their chief fortress is some forty miles from that cape, and the same distance from Soor, a seaport that played an important part in the operations I am about to describe.

Soon after Captain Thompson had removed to Kishm, a report reached his ears that some of the Beni-Abu-Ali tribe had been engaged in acts of piracy near El-Askara, on the sea-coast ; and forthwith, the Imaum requested the Political Agent of the British Government to render him assistance. Without first inquiring into the truth or otherwise of this allegation—and there is but too much reason to believe that the Imaum was led away by his hatred of the tribe, to place credence in unfounded reports—Captain Thompson sent a messenger to remonstrate with the people living on the scene of the supposed outrage. The native messenger proceeded to the spot in an Arab vessel ; and finding that, owing to the high surf, he could not communicate with the village, forthwith swam ashore and effected a landing.

After a short conference with the natives he was about

to return, when two Arabs and a party of negro slaves rushed forward and cut him down, killing him on the spot. The boat then returned to Kishm, and Captain Thompson was informed of the outrage, which was imputed to the Beni-Abu-Ali tribe, although no criminative evidence was, I believe, ever adduced to prove that such was the case. Upon this the British commander, who considered that he ought to take means to exact satisfaction, embarked with six companies of Sepoys, and six guns, and proceeded to Muscat. The Imaum, desirous of co-operating, brought a contingent of about 2,000 men, and accompanied Captain Thompson to Soor; from thence the combined force marched to Beni-Abu-Hasan, where a message was received from the Bedouins, expressing their willingness to give up the murderers, who had taken refuge among them. As it was considered that the tribe participated in the act, from the fact of their having given shelter to these assassins, Captain Thompson replied that they must lay down their arms before he would treat with them. The British officer little knew the character of the race with whom he had to deal, for a true Bedouin would rather die than yield his arms to any man; by doing so, indeed, he would be for ever disgraced. An indignant reply in the negative was returned; and accordingly the column moved on. It consisted, at the moment of commencing hostilities, of 311 Sepoys, commanded by British officers, a party of European artillerymen with six guns, and the Imaum's troops, commanded by that prince in person. Captain Thompson, lightly estimating the courage and strategy of his foe, marched on their town, and, on nearing the enemy, incautiously deployed his men from the

column to the line formation. The Bedouins, still retreating, occupied the date grove which surrounded their forts. The British force had passed Beni-Abu-Hasan, and were sweeping round the hill—the greater part of them being in line parallel to the date grove, when the whole tribe rushed out of their leafy covert; filling the air with their shouts of triumph, and brandishing their weapons, they fell like an avalanche upon the Sepoy ranks. Before these latter could be formed into column, or even before the order could be given, the wild soldiery of the desert had swept through the wavering line. The guns were unable to unlimber and get into action, and the gunners were cut down as they stood.

No pen can adequately describe the terrible scene that ensued. The ferocious Arabs, with their martial bearing and picturesque robes, charging in one dense column, each man armed with a long, heavy "tul-war," somewhat similar to a mediæval broad sword, and in the use of which they excelled; the Sepoys, inferior to their terrible foe, both as regards size and physical strength, and having for arms the bayonet, which was no match in the deadly hand-to-hand fighting that ensued. The catastrophe was hurried on by a remorseless fate, and hardly had the curtain risen on the first tableau than it descended rapidly on a scene of blood and carnage. The Sepoys, at the best of times, that is when backed up by British soldiers, are scarcely capable of contending with the fierce Arab races that inhabit Southern and Eastern Arabia; but now they were panic-stricken, and made not even an effort to rally round their English officers, or to save themselves from massacre. Suffice it to say, that of the 311 men who

went into action, 249 men and seven officers were, in a few minutes, dead or dying on the sandy plain that extends round the fort they had come to capture.

To do the Imaum but justice, it is due to him to say that he nobly exerted himself to retrieve the fortunes of the day, but it was of no avail. Sayyid Said exposed his person repeatedly, and fought in the foremost ranks of his people, with the courage of a Saladin, and, while endeavouring to rescue a wounded European soldier, was shot through the wrist. In this terrible emergency, the Imaum resolved to stand his ground, but his troops did not relish the idea of encountering the victorious Beni-Abu-Ali, and began to desert him. On this being mentioned to him, he said, proudly, "Let those who do not wish to stand by me, leave me to my fate." Captain Thompson, however, strongly urged him to retreat, and at length he gave the necessary orders. Only two officers, besides Captain Thompson, survived the fury of the enemy, who, according to their custom in battle, gave no quarter. It is related that one British officer, on holding out his sword as a token of surrender, was run through by his assailant, and the surgeon, who was sick, was dragged out of his palanquin and butchered on the spot. The defeated force reached Muscat after a five days' march, and Captain Thompson, on reporting the circumstances of his misadventure to the Bombay Government, was brought to a court-martial on the 4th May, 1821, and found guilty of rashly undertaking the expedition against his instructions.

We now come to the more agreeable task of describing the operations that were carried out to vindicate the disgraced honour of England. It was a thing unknown in

Indian history that a British force should be defeated, and all India burned to wipe out the stain from her escutcheon.

In January, 1821, a force of three thousand men was embarked under the chief command of Major-General Sir Lionel Smith, who twelve years before had commanded the troops that inflicted the first chastisement on the Jowassamee pirates. Of the men composing the army of retribution, one thousand two hundred and eighty-two were Europeans, and one thousand seven hundred and eighteen, natives, with six guns. On the 29th January the entire force effected a disembarkation at Soor. Not long after his arrival, the general was nearly falling a victim to his incautiousness ; for having, on the 11th February, encamped along with a small part of his troops two or three miles from the rest of the army, the Arabs, who displayed considerable skill in their mode of dealing with a foe so superior in numbers and in all the appliances of war, set out from their groves, and, approaching the camp by a forced march of thirty hours along tracts known only to themselves, fell upon the sleeping encampment, and nearly succeeded in cutting off the whole detachment. Gathering together, they rushed in upon the British force, at eleven o'clock at night, and, uttering their war-cry, "Allah, Akhbar !" drove in the picquet ; before the soldiers could be collected they had killed one officer, wounded three others, and placed *hors de combat* fifty rank and file. The troops had now formed and the Bedouins retreated, carrying with them their dead and wounded.

This taught a wholesome lesson to Sir Lionel Smith and his staff, and henceforth operations were carried on

as in the presence of a most vigilant and sleepless foe. On the 1st of March the expedition appeared before the fortress, the scene of the previous disaster. The entire Bedouin manhood arrayed for war, were seen to emerge from out its walls, and make in the direction of the grove; for an instant it was thought they were about to retreat, but those who thought so knew little of the audacious valour of the enemy. While executing some manœuvre, our troops for a moment exposed some portion of their flank ; it was *but for a moment*, but the Arab warriors saw their advantage, and flinging themselves recklessly on to the weak point, tried their utmost to re-enact the former scene of carnage. A desperate fight ensued ; laughing to scorn the fire of musketry and grape from the guns, though delivered at pistol shot, they pressed recklessly on and mingled in the British ranks, seizing the bayonets with one hand, while they cut down their white-faced foes with the trenchant steel of their tulwars, which, with its broad, thin, long blade, had an edge sharp as a razor. But useless was all this valour ; brave though the Bedouin was, and powerful and active of frame, he had now to encounter, not the supple enervated native of Hindostan, but men with as broad shoulders and dauntless hearts as any of his tribe ; it was the British soldier, with his cool and matchless courage, who was locked with him in the death struggle, and the swarthy child of the desert, with his passionate heart overflowing with religious rancour, succumbed in the unequal combat. All in vain were performed prodigies of valour by the fanatical Wahabees, to whom death in battle was a speedy and glorious translation to paradise. They clung to the muzzle of the guns belching forth fire and grape shot; they

clutched the steel bayonets and the barrels of the soldiers' muskets, or receiving in their bodies the bullets, or the cruel point of the bayonets, strove to cut down the detested Feringhees with the keen brands they knew so well how to handle ; and in a score of instances, too, they succeeded in effecting their object, for though spitted by the cold steel, or pierced by the ounce ball, they, with a last dying effort, wreaked a bloody revenge on the enemy they could not conquer. All that manhood could do, the wild chivalry of Oman well and nobly effected, but when they tried to annihilate the force of 3,000 British soldiers, they assayed a task beyond the power even of devotion and valour such as they had displayed.

Leutenant Wellsted, I.N., the eminent traveller, speaking of this example of heroic courage, well says, " It will stand without dimming their lustre by the side of the noblest deeds of Greece or Rome. The shades of the sacred Three Hundred would have welcomed with a smile such warriors to their side."

All our officers agreed they never saw more desperate fighting, and all admired the devotion of an enemy worthy of their steel. At length a small remnant of the Beni-Abu-Ali retired, but they disdained to fly. Retreating slowly, and in good order, they returned to their stronghold. A flag of truce was sent to the general, with the offer to surrender, but Sir Lionel Smith returned for answer that they must first lay down their arms, and five minutes were given for them to determine their course of conduct. At the end of this brief space of time, the artillery was brought to the front, and commenced playing on the walls. Soon two breaches

were effected. As the troops advanced to the storm, it was discovered that a flag of truce was displayed. The guns, which were throwing shells into the fort over the heads of the assaulting column were ordered to cease firing.

Only two hundred warriors of the Beni-Abu-Ali were taken prisoners, and thus was accomplished the destruction of their homes and the quasi extermination of their tribe. Our loss, consisting of two hundred killed and wounded, was severe, and spoke of the desperate resistance that had been encountered. On the surgeons of the British force offering to bind up the wounds of the survivors and amputate their mangled limbs, they obstinately refused all surgical help, preferring to die. It is related of them, and it affords a marvellous instance of the magnanimity and lofty fortitude which distinguished them equally with their prototypes the ancient Spartans, that when the sun sank below the horizon, and the hour had arrived when the thoughts of every pious Mahomedan are bent heavenwards, the small band of warriors, the sole remnant of a once noble tribe, calmly turned towards its expiring rays, and, falling on their knees, and with the right hand folded across the breast, repeated the eventide prayer. Surely the simple and child-like act of piety must have taught a lesson to the aliens, who stood as conquerors on the lonely desert that had for generations been the home of their captives. To my mind nothing more solemn or grand is told in history, for here were these people, homeless, defeated, prisoners, and expecting instant death.

The fort was razed to the ground, and the Imaum's

troops, in the intoxication of victory, cut down the date-trees, and turned on one side the water-courses, thereby making the place a wilderness. The Sheikh and his brother, Khadem, the same gallant leader who planned the night attack at Soor, together with some hundred and fifty of his followers were taken to Bombay. Khadem, however, was so desperately wounded, that he died during the passage, after much suffering. Thus for a time the Beni-Abu-Ali tribe ceased to exist.

It is satisfactory to relate that the Court of Directors of the East India Company, on learning that these brave men had been transported to Bombay as state prisoners, ordered their release, and further directed that they should be reinstated in their former position. This was done as far as was practicable.

What remained of their number—for cholera had committed great ravages in their ranks—were taken back to their native country. Assistance was given them to rebuild their ruined fortress, their poor household gods were set up again, and it was sought to restore the homes the great and mighty nation that rules nigh one third of the globe had reft from a tribe numbering at their prime one thousand men capable of bearing arms. It is a melancholy page of our Eastern history, and one we would willingly turn hurriedly over. Should a bard ever arise from among the decimated ranks of the handful that remained to them after the day when they stood against the disciplined ranks of Britain—a bard who could sing like Homer, and tell of the deeds of the eight hundred,—the retrospect would have nought of shame for those who died to defend their hearths, or for those who pined in distant Bombay.

Far from it; for could not these latter tell of the might and of the illimitable resources, in men and money, of the nation who came to their desert wilds, and thought it not unworthy their great name to exact the disgraceful condition that the arms of a foe who numbered only as one to three should be laid at their feet before they would treat with them.

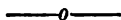
Many years after their return from captivity, Lieutenant Wellsted, while travelling through Oman, visited the tribe, and was received with warm hospitality by the very men upon whom we had inflicted wounds which time could never heal. Not only was no animosity expressed towards his countrymen, but they spoke with impulsive gratitude of the generous treatment they had experienced at the hands of that greatest of Bombay governors—Mountstuart Elphinstone. They conversed freely on the subject of the great calamity that had overtaken them, and acknowledged their defeat without bitterness.

Truly the type of the Beni-Abu-Ali is the beau ideal of the noble savage of whom poets have sung.





HOW WE HUMBLLED THE JOWASSAMEE PIRATES.



IN the year 1809 England had just commenced in Spain that life-and-death struggle with the great usurper Napoleon, which, though that extraordinary man thought it of little moment as compared with the campaigns conducted by himself elsewhere, yet, being successful, was chiefly instrumental in bringing about the Elba captivity, the Hundred Days, and the tremendous event at Waterloo, that caused the collapse of the gigantic empire he had reared to gratify the vaulting ambition that induced him to subordinate half Europe to his will.

In this same year, India, or rather that part of the Peninsular that was subject to us, had abundance of military employment for the restless Anglo-Saxon spirit that has caused the British nation, notwithstanding the fact of our having been branded as a nation of shop-keepers, to embark in wars in every quarter of the globe, so that, without doubt, if the muse of history writes true, she will speak of us as the most successful, if not the most warlike race that the world has seen since the days when the Roman legion was looked upon as the symbol of

resistless power, and the precursor of the civilisation that was to rescue from superstition and moral death the races over whose territory its victorious eagles should float.

For many years previous to the time occupied by my narrative, the Persian Gulf had been desolated by piratical tribes, the principal of whom was that known as the Jowassamee, so called from one Johasmai, a Mahomedan saint. These Jowassamee had recently embraced the faith of Abd-ul-Wahab, who was a sort of Luther in the reformation he worked in the ancient religion of the Prophet. Their chief town, Ras-ul-Khaimah, was situated on the coast of the Persian Gulf, in the province of Oman, which the reader will perceive, on consulting the map of Arabia, here juts out in a triangular form into the Straits of Ormuz, its apex forming the promontory known as Cape Mussendonī. In 1809, the patience and long-suffering that had been extended by the East India Company to the depredations of these lawless pirates were exhausted, and at the instance of the Bombay public, who raised a clamour at the annihilation of the Gulf trade, the Government resolved that an expedition should be fitted out to punish these merciless freebooters, who, not content with plundering every vessel worth the trouble, put the crews to death with the most refined tortures.

An expedition was accordingly organised, consisting of H.M.'s 65th regiment, detachments of the 47th and of the Bombay Artillery, with 1,000 sepoys, the whole being under the command of Colonel Smith of the 65th regiment. The naval part of the expedition was composed of H.M.'s frigate *La Chiffone*, Captain Wainwright, who was

also commodore of the squadron ; the *Caroline*, 38 guns, Captain Gordon ; and the following ships of war of the Indian Navy :—The *Mornington*, of 28 guns ; *Nautilus*, 14 ; the *Ternate*, *Aurora*, *Prince of Wales*, *Ariel*, *Vestal*, and *Fury*, with the *Stromboli* bomb-ketch and four large transports.

The fleet sailed from Bombay in September, and after a long voyage arrived at Muscat, with the loss of the *Stromboli*, which being an old and worn-out vessel, totally unfitted to put to sea, sunk soon after leaving Bombay harbour. At Muscat, the Imaum, who was glad to co-operate against his old enemies, promptly assisted us ; here also the fleet recruited, and the commanders matured their plans. As soon as these were arranged, the ships weighed for the Gulf, and after encountering a fleet of twenty-seven piratical craft, which they dispersed, arrived off the far-famed stronghold of Ras-ul-Khaimah, or Cape Tent. Operations were forthwith commenced by the ships of war opening a hot fire upon the defences ; but as owing to the shallowness of the water they were unable to lie very close in, the boats proceeded to land the troops from the transports.

The town was found to be situated on a low, sandy peninsular, while the neck of the isthmus was defended by a wall, and the sea face by batteries and intrenchments. The inhabitants, true to their reputation as the possessors of great courage, contested every inch of ground with the most obstinate valour. Never before having encountered Europeans in arms, they were filled with ideas of their invincibility, and fought with the energy of despair when they found the soldiers, nothing daunted by their fire, advance with the bayonet to the

capture of their works. The principal houses, as is usual in Arab town, were flat-roofed, and from their tops and loopholes in the walls a murderous fire was kept up on the assailants. But the valour and devotion of the Jowassamee were useless, and only served to heap with dead the breaches made by the cannon of their assailants: the walls were escaladed, and the town was carried by assault, and by two o'clock was in the possession of the troops; a general conflagration was then ordered and carried out, while the utmost licence was given the troops to plunder. These pirates were of so desperate a character that they neither gave nor expected quarter. If captured, they submitted with resignation to the fate they invariably dealt out to their captives, and when they fell into the hands of the Persians, or other nations by whom they were surrounded, they were always ruthlessly slaughtered. Wellsted, in his interesting "Travels in Arabia," speaking of this fortitude, relates of them that when brought off to the British ships, while yet uncertain of the fate that awaited them, and before their wounds were dressed, one of their number was asked by an officer what treatment they expected to receive. The stern and characteristic reply was, "The same immediate death we should have inflicted on you had your fortune been ours."

The magazine and warlike stores were consumed by fire, and the entire fleet of forty-eight large dhows, besides a great number of smaller craft, was destroyed. The troops were then re-embarked at daylight the next morning, and the expedition proceeded to Linga, a small port belonging to the Jowassamee, on the opposite shore of the Persian Gulf, near the eastern end of the island of Kishm. The

town was captured and burnt, and all the vessels found in the port were also set on fire. The greater portion of the troops was then despatched to Muscat for supplies, while some of the ships of the squadron, consisting of the commodore's ship *La Chiffone*, and Hon. Co.'s cruisers *Mornington*, *Ternate*, *Nautilus*, and *Fury*, and two transports, with 500 troops, proceeded to Luft, a piratical port on the northern side of the island of Kishm. The channel here being narrow and difficult of navigation, the ships were warped up to their stations, and the governor of the castle, which was found to be very strongly constructed, was summoned to surrender. The demand not being complied with, Colonel Smith landed with his men, and advanced to storm the place. The soldiers were received, however, with such a murderous fire that they had to beat a hasty retreat, after suffering severe loss. The defences of the castle were naturally very great, and the walls are described as of fourteen feet thickness, pierced with loopholes and strengthened with many redoubts. The troops were accordingly re-embarked, and a second summons was sent to the defenders, threatening that, failing its surrender, the ships should bombard the castle, and on its capture every man should be put to the sword. At daylight on the following morning it was discovered that the place had been abandoned; the town and fortress of Luft were then taken possession of by the British, and as they formerly belonged to the Imaum of Muscat, were delivered over with all their contents to that potentate.

From Luft the squadron proceeded to three other ports on the Ras-ul-Khaimah coast, which were taken, and all the boats found in them were burnt. Then the

ships joined the rest of the expedition at Muscat, from whence, after a few days' rest, the entire force, reinforced by a body of 4,000 native troops placed at the disposal of the commanders by the Imaum, sailed for a place called Shenaz, situated on the coast about half-way between Muscat and Cape Mussendom, and which had been taken from the Imaum by the Jowassamee.

The castle of Shenaz was remarkable for its great strength, and its defenders, relying on their ability to hold it, refused to surrender on a summons being sent to them. The men-of-war at once commenced to bombard the castle, but at first without producing any great effect, so strongly constructed were the walls. On the following morning the whole of the troops were landed, and all the necessary arrangements made for a regular siege. The ships also recommenced the bombardment, and about 4,000 shot and shell were thrown into the works during the next few days. At length a breach was reported to be practicable, and the soldiers advanced to the assault. The garrison fought with the utmost resolution, and, when overpowered in the main works, retired into two of the towers, and obstinately refused to surrender, notwithstanding that offers of quarter were repeatedly made to them. They maintained an unflagging fire upon their assailants, and fearlessly tossed back the hand grenades and other combustibles showered upon them by the troops.

At length, owing to the fire of the ships, the towers were almost reduced to ruins; still the Arabs with desperate tenacity refused to yield, until one of their number, who had given himself up as a prisoner, remonstrated with his countrymen, and pointed out the futility of re-

assistance, at the same time assuring the survivors that the English would spare their lives. As the belief that they would be sacrificed to the fury of the Imaum's soldiers had chiefly animated them in thus holding out, the small remnant of the garrison surrendered, and the place was delivered over to the rightful sovereign.

Thus were successfully concluded the objects for which the expedition of 1809 was organized. The armament returned to Bombay, and received the well-merited thanks of the local and supreme Government.

One would have thought that so signal a punishment would have prevented the piratical tribes of the Gulf from interfering with British commerce for a very long time. Gradually, however, the pirates returned to their old courses, and after the lapse of a few years it became obvious to the Indian authorities that the lesson of 1809 would have to be repeated. Several minor disputes regarding the capture of native vessels sailing under British colours arose between the piratical chiefs and the commanders of the cruisers of the Indian Navy, and it became apparent that little short of extermination would cure the radical evil of piracy.

In 1815 they became bolder than ever, and their ships appeared in the Red Sea, and in the following year a squadron of them captured, within sight of Mocha, four richly-laden British vessels, bound from Surat to that port, and massacred the crews. Still the long-suffering Indian Government did not interfere, and for some time the marauders confined their depredations to native vessels, which they might have carried on with impunity, for in those days English ships of war were not authorized to destroy pirates of any nationality wherever encoun-

tered, as has been customary in later years ; but when Ras-ul-Khaimah was rebuilt, and their fleet of ships had attained their pristine strength and numbers, the Jowassamee grew more bold, and defied the small squadron of the Company's Cruisers. The wager of battle, I may say for the credit of the brave little service, was ever cheerfully taken up, and I could narrate many stirring tales of fierce hand-to-hand fights, deeds of desperate valour, all unknown to fame, that have been enacted in the narrow waters of the Persian Gulf. All the chief piratical tribes entered into a coalition, and at length our old ally, the Imaum of Muscat, seriously alarmed for his safety, applied to the Indian Government for assistance. Aid was promised him, and negotiations were opened with the Pasha of Egypt, who was desirous of humbling the Wahabis, to which sect the pirates belonged ; but his object having been attained independently, the British authorities resolved to act alone.

An expedition was accordingly fitted out at Bombay, and the military command was given to Sir W. Keir, while Captain Collier, of H.M.'s frigate *Liverpool*, was appointed commodore. The squadron consisted of the *Liverpool* and several smaller ships of the Royal and Indian navies ; while the troops were composed of H.M.'s 65th and 47th regiments, one company of Bombay European Artillery, 1st battalion of the 2nd N.I., 2nd battalion of the 4th N.I., and flank companies of the 1st battalion of the 3rd N.I., and the Bombay Marine battalion ; in all about 1,700 European and 2,500 native troops. The armament sailed from Bombay in September, 1819, and after first touching at Muscat, arrived off Ras-ul-Khaimah early in the following December. The troops were forth-

with landed, and, after some spirited fighting, drove in the Arabs in front of them ; batteries were then erected at a range of 300 yards, to breach the walls. The ships and boats also opened a vigorous bombardment. On the sixth day the enemy made a sally, and so fierce and unexpected was the attack, that for a time they were masters of our batteries ; but the whole British force advanced to wipe out the disgrace of this temporary reverse, and the guns were recaptured after some desperate fighting. At the termination of two days' more firing from the heavy artillery, an assault was ordered ; the troops advanced to the attack, expecting a severe contest, but, to the astonishment of the assaulting column, it was found that the place had been abandoned.

After the fall of Ras-ul-Khaimah, part of the squadron sailed for Sharga, a strong fort to the westward of their chief stronghold. This place also was captured, and razed even with the ground ; the powerful fleet of dhows and boats found here, and at Ras-ul-Khaimah, was burnt, and then the chiefs of the Jowassamee, and the Sheikhs in alliance with them, were fain to sue for peace on the terms dictated by their conquerors. Repairing to the general's camp, they signed a treaty by which they stipulated to abstain from plunder and piracy, from putting their prisoners to death, from quarrelling among themselves, and from trafficking in slaves. The vanquished Sheikhs also agreed to carry a flag indicative of their being friendly to the British, and to furnish all their vessels with papers, after the manner of civilized states. Ships of the squadron were despatched to destroy some minor pirate ports, and this having been done, the entire expeditionary force returned to Bombay.

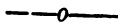
Before leaving the Gulf, Sir W. Keir left at Ras-ul-Khaimah, a small military detachment, under the command of Captain Thompson, who was also made Political Resident. This body of troops, which was intended to enforce an adherence to their engagements on the part of the Jowassamee, was subsequently removed to the island of Kishm, and was, unhappily, the cause of still further complication, as narrated in the previous chapter.

The second expedition of 1819 effectually deterred the piratical tribes from returning to their old courses, and it was also the proximate cause of the Bombay Government undertaking the valuable series of surveys of the hitherto unknown pirate coast, which were so ably carried out by the scientific officers of the Indian Navy.





THE GHOST OF THE STATE CABIN.



TALKING about ghosts, sir, reminds me of a strange affair that occurred on board a ship in which I sailed as a boy. But, may be, sir, you don't believe in ghosts?"

"Well, quartermaster," said I, "never mind about that; perhaps your tale may convince me if I am incredulous, and I think we cannot better pass away an hour of this long, sleepy, middle watch, than by a yarn about ghosts; only, you know, don't let it be too 'tough.'"

"Your honour, you shall have it just as it occurred not a word more nor less; so, if it's 'too tough' by the keeping, like the all the time, I'll be damned if he laughed at this job of mine. I'll be damned if I'll be so-called beef, on w'at I'll be regaled, and are you?"

This conversation took place in the harbour of the watch, and



dramatis personæ ; time, 1.15 A.M. For my part, I was unconscionably sleepy, so was glad to listen to the bluff old salt's story ; and, moreover, I felt that peculiar sort of interest which, in my experience of human nature, I have found, is aroused, among young and old, whenever a "real ghost story" is about to be told by an individual who believes in the truth of every syllable of the incidents of his supernatural narrative.

"I must tell you, sir," began the petty officer, "H.M.S. *Thunderstorm*, aboard of which I was a messenger-boy (so it must have been many a year ago), was stationed off the coast of Malacca. We were under the orders of the commander-in-chief on the East India and China station, and, at the time the action of my story commences, were looking forward to returning home, having served upwards of three years in those seas.

"The captain of the *Thunderstorm* was a tartar, who wielded the despotic powers with which the commanding officer of one of His Majesty's ships was entrusted in those days, with an iron hand. He delighted in flogging his men, and his great happiness was to drill them aloft at 'sending masts and yards down,' and 'bending' and 'unbending' sails, until the seamen were almost killed with fatigue ; this he would do, too, in the middle of the day, during the fearful heats of noontide—during the hours when it is the invariable custom among all considerate captains to keep their men under shelter as much as possible. The consequence was, that sickness prevailed on board to an unprecedented extent, and many hands died of fever, or illnesses contracted from over-exertion.

The sailors hated and dreaded him accordingly. The

ship wore the gloomy aspect of a prison. There was no dancing now, no singing of songs and choruses in the evenings when the day's work was done, as is customary among the honest Jacks when their light-heartedness is not weighed down by the brutal hand of a martinet, such as Captain Lingard. Things could not go on long thus; the men deserted whenever they had an opportunity, and even tried to leave the detested ship when escape was well-nigh hopeless. Thus two seamen tried to swim off to the shore, on the desolate coast of Java, and one of them met with a frightful end. While in the water he was seized by a shark, and his screams attracted attention on board the frigate. The body of the poor wretch was never recovered; but his scarcely less unfortunate comrade was brought back by the boat sent in pursuit of the fugitives. On our arrival at Singapore, this man was tried by a court martial, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour—a punishment which, in that tropical climate, is of a fearful character to any European. Thus matters went on aboard the *Thunderstorm*. Every week some one was brought to the gangway to receive the degrading punishment of the lash; and the prisoners' cells on the orlop-deck—horrid, suffocating dens, in which a man could scarce stand upright or lie at full length—were seldom untenanted by some wretches unhappy enough to fall under the displeasure of the tyrant of the quarter-deck.

“It was painful to see a released prisoner as he emerged from his pestiferous dungeon, after a confinement there of a week or so on bread and water; pale and stooping was his face and figure, and languid his gait, as he was discharged and returned [to the fore-castle, to add one

more to the number of those who brooded savagely over their wrongs, and were only restrained from breaking out into open mutiny by the knowledge that the frigate was under orders to return to England, where, on their arrival, they would be free from the clutch of their persecutor, and able to enjoy their pay, the fruits of three years' toil, with the consciousness that they had honourably retained their previous good character. The *Thunderstorm* had been ever remarkable in the fleet as a 'happy ship,' until the death of her late captain, some three months before the date of my story, caused a vacancy in the command, which the admiral filled up by the promotion of his senior lieutenant, who quickly succeeded in turning a well-disciplined, contented crew into a set of malcontents.

"It was with such a state of affairs on board that the *Thunderstorm* weighed her anchor, and, sailing through the narrow straits which separate the islands of Sumatra and Java, stood across the Indian Ocean for 'the Cape.'

"One morning, when the order was given by the first lieutenant at the usual time, about four bells (six o'clock), to 'shake out the reefs,' the captain was seen to come up on deck with his slow sauntering step. As soon as his morose, not to say forbidding, countenance was fairly visible above the 'coamings of the hatchway, a whisper was quickly passed round by all hands on deck, that 'Old Harry,' as he was called, was in one of his evil humours. The heart of more than one brave man, who had faced danger and death oftentimes in many forms, quailed somewhat as he marked the cold cruel eye of the man who had by an ill chance been placed in absolute

authority over him—a man who he knew was capable of almost any act of tyranny. Half of the old petty officers had, by his mere caprice, been already disgraced and ‘logged,’ or entered in the log-book as having been guilty of flagrant misconduct—a proceeding which ruined their prospects for promotion to the warrant grades in His Majesty’s service.

“No sooner had he come on deck than the first lieutenant gave the order, ‘man the rigging,’ ‘lay aloft,’ and away up the shrouds ran the nimble seamen in emulous haste. The captain threw his eye up the star-board rigging, and singling out one of the last of the maintop-men, roared out, ‘You, Williams, last again. Spring your luff, you lazy hound, d’ye hear?’ ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ answered the seaman, and strove his utmost to gain upon those before him. Of course some one must always be last in a race, and in such a race, where strong limbs and greater agility gain the advantage, the man who is not as robustly made as his shipmates is sure to go to the wall. Williams was of delicate constitution, and had frequently been on the sick list; for which the captain had denounced him once or twice as a skulk, and had warned him that ‘he had his eye upon him.’ For these reasons the crew, I remember, looked upon Williams as one marked out for the vengeance of ‘Old Harry,’ and hence the unfortunate man, anxiously desirous of propitiating the good-will of the captain, answered his angry summons with what he intended merely as a cheerful response. Luckless wight! Better for him that he had never been born than that he should have thus attempted to stay the wrath of the infuriated officer, prowling about the deck seeking whom he might devour

—a two-legged animal of the genus ‘carnivora,’ more to be dreaded than the most savage quadruped of the field. ‘You ——!’ (I shall not offend your ears, sir, by enumerating the foul oaths with which he cursed the maintopman.) ‘Lay down from aloft.’ I’ll teach you to answer me when I address you! Master-at-arms, put this man in irons; and Mr. Portbrace,’ turning to the first lieutenant, ‘place him in confinement, on bread and water, and to-morrow, at divisions, rig the gratings. We’ll scratch his back with the cat; perhaps that may knock some of the mutinous notions out of the heads of the crew.’ So saying, he dived down below, and left the first lieutenant to carry out his instructions. The next morning, no sooner had all hands been piped off from ‘divisions,’ than Captain Lingard shouted out to the head carpenter to rig the gratings. This was done by ‘Chips’ and his mates in the usual manner. The commander stood moodily by, seeing that the work was done properly, while the officers paced the decks with looks of disapprobation at the preparations for the approaching saturnalia of brutality unmistakably expressed in their faces. The men hung about in expectant groups, knowing what was coming, and talking in whispers as they cast sidelong glances at the well-known gratings, the scene of so much torture and disgrace. The captain now broke the silence with, ‘Boatswain, turn the hands aft to witness punishment.’ That warrant officer muttered, between his teeth, something which was only audible to those nearest him, and fumbling for his ‘call’ threw a glance towards his mates to follow motions. Then, putting their pipes to their lips, and whistling in shrill unison, the trio sang out, in hoarse accents, ‘Hands, witness punishment!’

"The men slowly came trooping aft ; the marines fell in with fixed bayonets ; the master-at-arms reported the quarters down below as 'clear' to the mate of the lower deck, who communicated it to the first lieutenant, who informed the captain ; then, amidst the most solemn silence, this 'lord of all he surveyed' ordered the prisoner to be brought up from his cell, and a file of marines, with the sergeant, went below, and soon appeared with the unfortunate man for whom all this portentous preparation had been made. He came, and all eyes were turned towards the delinquent, who had dared to say 'Ay, ay, sir,' to his superior officer, and who was going to suffer agony and humiliation for so dire an offence. His face was ashy pale, and he trembled visibly as he stepped from off the top round of the ladder, and stood face to face with his persecutor. He was led to the open space in the middle of the quarter-deck, where he halted. The captain, panting to gratify his revenge, neglected even the salutary custom of addressing a few words to the man under sentence of punishment, pointing out the article of war against which he had offended. He merely surveyed the seaman with a scowl and a sneer at his too obvious trepidation, and growled out, 'Strip, sir.' Williams turned a piteous look towards the arbiter of his fate, and appeared as if about to supplicate for mercy, 'Strip, sir !' was all the answer he got to his mute appeal. It was vain to look for mercy there ; as well might he have hoped to find aught but a bloodthirsty intent in the eyes of a hungry tiger, when the monarch of the jungle has marked for his own some antelope browsing near him in placid content. Williams threw off his 'jumper' and under vest, and bared his body to the

waist. 'Seize him up,' said the captain; and the carpenter's mates secured his ankles and his wrists to the capstan bars, the master-at-arms the while screening his bare back from view with his jumper. The 'seizing up' concluded, the captain gave the order to the boatswain, 'Do your duty, Mr. Martindale.' The shirt was withdrawn from the back, already seeming to quiver at the anticipation of the torture. Mr. Martindale, his head cocked on one side, and his left eye closed, the better to measure his distance, took up his position with the accuracy of an old practitioner; then, running his fingers through the tangled tails of the cat with a calm and business-like air, he raised that instrument quickly, and brought it down with a 'swish' on the back of the wretch, whose whole body bent with the shock of the blow.

"'One,' sang out the master-at-arms. I will not inflict upon my readers an account of the torture undergone by the hapless seaman at the gratings, nor enlarge upon the pitiful sight presented by the poor fellow as the crimson flushes from each stroke fell upon the fair white skin like a mantle, until the scarlet streaks became lost in the thick purple flood, which first only stained the knotted cords of the whip, and at length, flowing more freely, trickled down his back till it discoloured his white trousers. Suffice it to say, that when the brawny arm of the boatswain had 'laid in' a dozen, the cat was handed over to the no less brawny biceps of his chief mate; and when that petty officer had inflicted his dozen, the tails were wielded by the second boatswain's mate, whose muscular development was scarcely inferior to his chief's.

"The third dozen completed, the 'tail' was taken up

with an unflagging energy worthy a better cause, or a more thick-skinned patient, by the warrant officer, who made up the fifty lashes with a rattling fourteen delivered so rapidly that it seemed to take away the breath of the lookers-on, though the inspiration of the victim, which had hitherto been sighed forth in moans and bitter exclamations, seemed thereby to be pumped out from his heart in one long choking flood of agony.

"It was all over now; his head had fallen on one side, and he was voiceless like the rest of his shipmates, among whom a silence had fallen as of the grave—a silence in which the proverbial pin might have been heard to drop.

"What an unspeakable relief it was to all of us that the hideous business was over! I know that the cold perspiration stood on my face like great beads.

"The quartermaster stepped hastily forward, at a sign from the first lieutenant, and began to unloose the prisoner's wrists. 'He has fainted, sir,' said he to that officer, touching his hat. 'Fainted be d——d!' replied the captain, in a hoarse choking voice, and looking as if he would like to give the quartermaster a dozen for his temerity in opening his mouth; 'cut him down and pipe forward.' So saying he quickly retired to his quarters, his sword breaking the stillness as it clanked on the deck. A low murmur broke from the long line of seamen, and the white, pale faces and clenched teeth and hands of the men boded but ill for the future discipline of the once 'happy ship.'

"And where was the doctor all this time, the reader will ask, that he did not interfere with his protest against the barbarity of flogging a man so palpably delicate?

The doctor unfortunately was himself very ill, and confined to his bed, so there was no one to feel the pulse of the sufferer and report to the monster in epaulettes that the limits of human endurance had been reached—a notice which even *he* dared not have disregarded.

“Williams was carried down below and placed on the sick-list, where he continued, notwithstanding the protestations of the captain that he was ‘skulking;’ and his name was not struck off that sick-list until it was entered in the more terrible book in which all our names shall some day be inscribed. I mean the ever-lengthening roll on which the busy finger of Death is ceaselessly employed.

“After Williams’s death, the captain grew more morose than ever, but yet he was a changed man. He left all the duties of the ship to be performed by the first lieutenant, kept chiefly to his quarters, and avoided all conversation. One day I went down below to his state cabin—I was the messenger of the watch—to report a ship in sight; for the lieutenant, whose duty it was to communicate with his superior officer, could not at the time leave the deck. It was the middle watch at night, as I remember, about five bells, or half-past two o’clock. I was about to open the door of the state cabin, when I heard some one talking inside, and could distinguish the husky tones of the captain’s voice. Not thinking anything of this, I pushed the door open and looked in, when a sight met my eyes which I shall never forget, and which froze my blood with horror, so that I could neither move away nor close the door.

“Sir,” said the veteran quartermaster, approaching closer to me, and lowering his voice till it sounded

hoarse, and shook with an emotion which denoted the vividness of the scene his mind now conjured up (notwithstanding that the lapse of more than forty years might have been supposed to have dulled the terror of the unforgotten vision that then met his eye), "Sir," he repeated in a loud whisper, "a solitary swing-lamp, almost expiring in its socket, alone lit the large low-roofed apartment, casting around shadows which looked now deep, now hazy and unreal, but always gigantic, and instinct with a fearful sense of restless life, such as haunts one when fever or nightmare weighs down the brain with a nameless terror. On the port side of the large cabin was slung the cot; in it lay, or rather crouched, the captain. He was sitting sideways, with his face turned towards the door; grasping the canvas side of the cot, with his arms extended, he had pushed himself as far back in his bed as he could, until I thought he would certainly fall out backwards. His eyes were cast down a little, and directed towards something that appeared to engross all his faculties; the eyelids were widely distended, so that the white of the eye could be seen all round the pupil, and they were fixed on the object, whatever it was, with a look of concentrated terror. His face was deathly pale, his form trembled so that the cot swayed slightly, although his person was motionless; and I even thought—though it must have been fancy—that his hair stirred on his head with horror.

"It was a fearful sight to behold this man, and I was rooted to the spot where I stood, while a cold sweat broke out over my forehead. I looked in the direction of the captain's glance, and there, sir, as I gazed, cer-

tain shadows gradually formed themselves into a distinct shape, until what was at first only an outline assumed a certain consistency, and a figure appeared before me. It was no chimera of the brain, though it never lost an indefinable ghostlike aspect.

"Before me, and at the side of the hammock, there crouched the figure of a man, and though the face was turned from me so that I could not see its lineaments, the contour of the form recalled to mind unmistakably the short, somewhat broad, person of Williams, deceased now about three weeks. There it sat on a chair, gathered together in a heap, like a huge toad, and motionless. As I raised my eyes to the captain's face, there he also sat, with his fascinated gaze still directed towards his fearful visitant with that look of unutterable dismay. The whole cabin round these two figures was buried in semi-obscurity, and the lamp placed at the right hand of the captain threw a fitful light over the fearful personages: as I looked the candle had burned lower, and yet lower, and the darkness, which had for some time shrouded in gloom the more distant parts of the chamber, slowly crept over them also, until it closed around the two central figures, and covered them, as it seemed to my heated fancy, with a pall. The wick flickered, died away, and flamed out again, but they never stirred; it sputtered, suddenly burned up with a lurid yellow light, and then, the grease being all consumed, it fell over on one side and expired.

"Filled with a tenfold fear, I roused myself from the spell that seemed to enchain my senses, turned noiselessly and fled away from the presence of the unearthly pair. Hardly had I gained the deck than a loud scream was

heard from the state cabin. The lieutenant of the watch, impatient at my prolonged absence, was about going below, and met me returning. He was joined instantly by the quartermaster and two seamen, and they were making their way aft, when the captain-himself was seen to bound upon deck like a madman, and rush to the helmsman as if for protection. Meeting these four persons, he stopped, put his hand to his head, and muttering that he had had a nightmare, ordered the surgeon to be sent to him.

"The doctor had a long interview with his superior, and the result was that, after Captain Lingard had retired to his couch, with a sentry placed, at his own request, by his bedside, the surgeon came up to the lieutenant of the watch, and I heard him inform that officer that it was desirable the first lieutenant should be called immediately.

"It was now nearly four o'clock. When the first lieutenant made his appearance, the officer of the watch temporarily gave over charge of the deck to the young midshipman, and the three gentlemen went below into the ward-room, and held a long consultation.

"No agreement seemed to be arrived at between them; so all the ward-room officers, including the third and fourth lieutenants, the master, and the purser, were summoned at about five o'clock. They rose, evidently unanimous on the point under deliberation. As soon as it was daylight, all hands were 'piped up' on deck, by the orders of the senior lieutenant; and then, when every man was mustered aft, the executive officer took a document from the hands of the surgeon, and, in a loud voice, informed all present that the captain had been

declared by the chief medical officer of the ship to be 'of unsound mind;' and that the officers of the ship, aware of the serious responsibility of the step they were about to take, had decided to relieve him from his duties, and put him in confinement. The surgeon's certificate was then read, the official log-book brought up, and the speaker, before the assembled ship's company, made an entry to the effect that he assumed command for the reasons above stated. The crew listened in silence, touched their hats respectfully to their new commander, and went forward, where the subject was freely canvassed, and intense satisfaction expressed at the change.

"I know not what passed below when the unfortunate officer awoke to a sense of his altered position. He was frequently very violent, and had to be put under restraint, and, during the paroxysms of his madness, it became necessary to bind him down with lashings.

"His condition became quickly worse, and the end was not far.

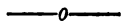
"Two strong men were always at his bedside. One night he jumped out of his cot, and, eluding his keepers, rushed through the door of his cabin, which happened to be open. He was seized by the sentry, but managed to overcome him, and threw him down. The next minute his two custodians, aroused by the sentry's cries for assistance, were upon him; but, by an exertion of his great strength, he succeeded in drawing the marine's bayonet—and, though the blow he aimed at the sentry's heart was averted by the weapon being struck down, he stabbed the man in the thigh, severing an artery. With a yell of satisfaction the maniac rose, flung aside both the seamen, and sprang up the companion ladder in two

bounds. Rushing to one of the quarter-deck guns, he jumped on it, and from thence to the hammock nettings, like a wild cat. Many men ran forward to seize him, but with a wild scream, 'There he is, stop him! oh! stop him,' he eluded them all, and sprang forward into the darkness, and down into the sea, which boiled and churned alongside like a devil's caldron, yawning to receive him. He disappeared, lost for ever to human sight, and no regrets followed the tyrannical captain of the *Thunderstorm*."





THE CAPTAIN OF THE FORETOP'S YARN.;



OUR ship, the *Tigris*, one of the Honourable East India Company's vessels of war, was lying at Marghill, a place a few miles above Bussorah, which, as the reader knows, is situated on the Shatt-ul-Arab, a little below the point at which the Euphrates and Tigris flow into that noble stream. A party of officers and men, belonging to the *Tigris*, myself among the number, had been out for a day's pig-shooting in the swampy jungle, some six miles higher up the river than Marghill. We had had a very good day's sport, everything considered, and our efforts had been rewarded with the bagging of five enormous "porkers," together with some wild duck and other game. The two boats were now pulling leisurely back with the ebb tide, and the officers enjoyed the *otium sine dignitate* of the stern sheets, and a pipe, with an occasional reference to a "leather bottel," concerning which the old song speaks, and whose contents I will not further particularize.

It was truly a lovely evening; the day had been

warm,—I may say “blazing hot,”—for these two words convey, better than a whole page of fine writing, the nature of the intense heat through which, for the sake of sport, we had struggled manfully. Sport, do I say? Rather may I call beating for eight hours through tangled jungle, some seven feet high, and walking through nullahs of dirty water or thick mud, the hardest of very hard labour. But it was all over now, and satisfactorily too, notwithstanding such little contretemps as one man being hit by a spent ball in the leg, and another being run through the fleshy part of the calf by a bayonet handled by a son of Erin, who, it was presumed, in the excitement of madly charging a fugitive pig, mistook, in some way, the limb of his shipmate for the body of the alarmed quadruped.

The sun had now set, and the two cutters were returning, with scarcely any exertion on the part of the men, who did little more than dip their oars in and out of the stream, for the swift current of the majestic river bore us along quickly and noiselessly. Occasionally we passed a few wolves on the bank, quarrelling over the carcass of some defunct brother-wolf, or other animal; and now and then a flight of wild ducks soared overhead in a long line, as they wended their way to their home after a day's foraging on some distant creek of the river. It was a peaceful scene; and whether it was that the seamen were fatigued with the day's amusement, or that this delightful quiet struck some responsive chord in the breasts of the roughest among them, I know not, but it is certain that the silence, reigning on all around, communicated itself to the boat's crews, and only occasionally a voice broke the stillness by a question or observation

addressed to a messmate, which was answered by an equally laconic reply. When it grew darker, the seamen became more loquacious, no doubt influenced by the myriads of croaking frogs, which, as night drew on, offered, by the dissonant sounds they emitted, a ludicrous contrast to the scene I have attempted to depict.

Jack lighted his pipe—the stern rule against smoking in boats being relaxed on this occasion—and, when Jack lights his pipe, he shows an irresistible tendency either to spin or to listen to a yarn; for your true sailor is as much given to story-telling or story-listening as your veritable Eastern.

Steering the cutter in which I and another officer were sitting, was a seaman of the name of Saunders. Saunders was captain of the fore-top of the starboard watch on board the *Tigris*; and, though nearly sixty years of age, was a fine hale fellow, and not too old to show the young men of his top the way to run up the rigging, or lay out along the topsail yard, when the hands were piped to reef topsails. I knew that when a boy Saunders had seen service in the Persian Gulf against pirates, and a bright thought struck me; to wit, that a pleasant half-hour might be passed if he could be induced to narrate one of his youthful adventures.

“Saunders,” said I, “suppose you spin a yarn to Mr. Daniel”—that was my brother officer’s name—“and myself; and I think we can muster something wet to quicken your memory.”

After a little demur—for the rugged old petty officer was as modest about talking of his achievements as a brave man ever is—we overcame his scruples by the application of a “second mate’s nip” of the V.O.J.—*i.e.*,

very old Jamaica. Smacking his lips and eyeing the flask, Saunders, like an honest man, immediately set to work to fulfil his share of the compact. Divested of all the nautical idioms he employed, and rendered into sober English, the petty officer related the following "plain, unvarnished tale," which I will here state may be taken as a simple narrative of facts that can be verified by a reference to the records of the Indian navy, which, I presume are to be found, if not seen, somewhere among the official documents of the India Office.

In the year 1807 I was a boy aboard the Hon. East India Company's cruiser, *Fury*, of six guns, commanded by Lieutenant Gowan. The *Fury* was a very small craft; her stowage capacity was not over 100 tons, and she carried a complement of 42 officers and men. This crew, considering her size, was quite enough, as they were stowed away without any regard to their convenience; but it was not a man too many when the state of affairs prevailing at that time in the Persian Gulf is taken into account.

As already mentioned, the Jowassamee pirates two years before had encountered the Sultan of Muscat off Lingar, and in a tremendous fight—a very Trafalgar for bloodshed and the important consequences it involved,—had annihilated his naval power and left the Sultan a corpse on the deck of his ship.

It was in the height of their insolent and unchecked supremacy in the waters of the Persian Gulf that the *Fury* was ordered to proceed from Bussorah to Bombay, with important despatches from the Political Resident at the former place to the Indian Government. We had left

the mouth of the Shatt-ul-Arab, and were passing near the town of Grane, which, I may state, for the information of those of my readers who do not care to refer to the map, is situated near the island of Bahrein on the Arabian side of the Gulf, when a single large buglah was seen following us in a suspicious manner. There was only a light breeze at the time ; and though, of course, we had no wish or intention to make our escape from the native craft—for the crews of the ships of the squadron entertained an honest English contempt for our adversaries, whom, like our countrymen everywhere, they underrated—yet it was desirable that, as we were near the land, preparations should be made for a possible attack. The waters over which we were sailing were also the chief rendezvous of the rascally pirates, and soon we should be passing almost within sight of the stronghold of the Sultan of Bahrein, one of the most treacherous of their chieftains.

It behoved us, therefore, to be on our guard, and the more so as we could not take the initiative in any hostile movement on the part of our wily foes. The little schooner was quickly put in a complete state of defence ; and not too soon either, for three other large buglahs made their appearance from under the land, and joined the craft already following in our wake. Without doubt there was a preconcerted intention on their part to attempt our capture.

The captain called the crew aft, and made them a short and spirited harangue, which was answered by a cheer from us all ; and there was not a man among us, I may say with perfect truth, who was not only hugely delighted at the prospect of a sharp fight, but was filled with in-

dignation at the insolence of a set of murderous cut-throats daring to assume the offensive against an English man-o'-war, manned by British hearts of oak.

"We'll teach them a lesson, boys," were the gallant Lieutenant Gowan's concluding words; and they found a willing echo in all under his command.

We kept along the "even tenour of our way," neither making nor taking in sail, while it was evident that our neighbours were chasing us. About an hour and a half passed without any change in our relative positions, but gradually the wind began to die away, and, as it lessened, so the buglahs crept nearer to us; still, when the pleasant breeze gave place to a dead calm, they were a considerable distance astern, and out of gun-shot. The great mainsail of the *Fury* flapped, and the gaff swung about lazily, as the brigantine rolled on the long, uneasy swell. We were within soundings, and the ship's head was turned more seawards, careless of the quartette of dangerous-looking strangers who barred the way in that direction. In sober earnest, were those craft what we expected, there was some uncommonly hot work cut out for us; the Pirates of the Persian Gulf, whether belonging to the Jow-assamee, or to the smaller tribes of the Beni As and Men-assir, never gave nor expected quarter, and, when any resistance was offered, they always slaughtered their captives with aggravated cruelty. We had nothing before us now but to fight it out, till not a man was left to tell the tale if we were overpowered; and we all knew it.

A dead, glassy calm fell over the deep; and, as we stood or lounged by our guns, awaiting the inevitable attack, I leaned through the gunport, and looked down into the liquid depths alongside, and watched the shoals of tiny

fish as they swam round in countless myriads, wholly unexpectant of the meal preparing for them. "What a feast," I thought, "you little creatures will soon enjoy !" And I wondered whether the staple of the fare would be the flesh of black or white men. How frightened, too, they will be at the red dye in the water ; doubtless the *savans* among them will put it down to some phenomenon ; while some ancient fish, "the oldest inhabitant" may be, will recall to mind how, some years before, in Bushire Roads, or off the island of Kenn, he forgets which, the sea-water presented the same peculiar appearance.

: But I was suddenly roused from my reverie by the cry, "They are coming ;" and, immediately after, the stern, calm voice of the captain resounded over the deck. "To your quarters, men. Load with grape shot."

It was too true, the pirates had taken to their boats, which they had hoisted out of the buglahs ; and they were pulling for us. Eight large boats the flotilla numbered ; they had pushed off together, at a preconcerted signal, and were firing away with great spirit. The crews were singing a wild sort of war-song—I suppose more to inspire us with terror than to screw their courage "to the sticking-place," for there could be but one opinion of their desperate valour in war. Our preparations had all been made ; so there was nothing to be done now but to wait patiently for the order to open fire. Lieutenant Gowan looked pale and anxious, though it was not on account of the approaching conflict—his reckless bravery had been proved in too many a desperate fray for any doubt to rest upon his courage—but it was the "instructions" he had received from his superiors at Bombay, not on any account

to commence the action, that weighed upon his mind now, in this hour of extreme peril and fierce trial. He paced up and down the quarter-deck of his little ship, with his mind torn with contending resolves. Should he open fire first, and the fact become known at head-quarters, he would certainly forfeit his commission; on the other hand, the lives, perhaps, of all entrusted to his care, and the safety of the ship he commanded, were involved in his delivering the first broadside of grape. As the precious moments for determining his course fled by, and the enemy drew rapidly near, the conflict in his mind must have been most painful. At length a strict sense of duty triumphed over the mere dictates of a slavish obedience, which would have induced him to shun the awful responsibility that so often devolves upon men in the twin services. It was not yet too late, though in another few moments it might be so. The instant he decided that it was imperatively necessary that he should commence the action, a calm succeeded the storm that had raged within him; he stood still, now, close to the after carronade on the starboard side, and, in a low, firm voice, totally free from a particle of agitation, said to the captains of the guns on the side on which the pirates were advancing: "Men, train your guns so as to bear on the three foremost of the enemy's boats, and fire when I give the word; only take aim, and don't, for the life of you, hurry yourselves."

Not a word was uttered; complete silence reigned throughout the "peopled decks;" and the only sound that met the ear was the splash and rattle of the oars, which grew louder and quicker as the boats' crews gave way and strove hard to be the first to board, and to become also

the first fruits of the harvest that the great reaper, Death, was soon about to gather to himself.

"Ready!" echoed over the deck, startling us from the fascination with which we had watched the boats in their rapid approach; and the word was almost lost in the succeeding "Fire!" which again was drowned in the thundering utterances of the carronades. A few moments passed before we knew the extent of the execution done among the foe, for we were too busy reloading the cannon which had recoiled in-board.

The guns were again run out, and on the smoke clearing off, it was discovered that one boat, at least, had disappeared from the scene, while it was evident another of them had been badly hit. We had fired at such close quarters that the grape-shot had committed fearful ravages, and the whole flotilla, for a moment, seemed so paralyzed that the crews ceased to row. Profiting by this irresolution, the small-arm men, consisting of all the crews of the port guns, poured in a fire of musketry. Again were the starboard carronades loaded. The captain sung out in a cheery voice, "Steady, men. Depress your muzzles, and don't throw away your fire!" It was sound advice, for the boats had approached still nearer with the way they carried on them. Now, recovering from the confusion into which they had been temporarily thrown, six of the Arab boats advanced once more to board. Again were they met with a broadside, but yet some of them continued to advance. With yells of rage they came on; and, in another minute, three or four struck us on the quarter, and dared thus "to beard the lion in his den—the Douglas in his hall."

"Away there, all hands; repel boarders!" roared out

the young lieutenant, though the order was scarcely needed ; for the seamen, seeing that the battle was to be fought out on the decks of their ship, had seized each man his boarding-pike or cutlass, and flocked to the point menaced. Here the fight raged furiously, but not for long. Fierce and physically powerful as the pirates might be, they were no match for the fiery men-o'-war's-men, who, inspired with feelings of rage at the despised "nigger" attempting to capture an English ship of war, fought as does a lioness when robbed of her whelps.

The struggle was short and decisive, and the pirates, at whatever point they attempted to board, were hurled back into the water with the terrible boarding-pikes driven down their throats. Some few at one time gained a footing on the deck, but they were cut down forthwith. This hand-to-hand fighting was soon over, and then the enemy beat a retreat.

But five boats returned to their buglahs, with greatly diminished crews ; two had been sunk, and one was so much injured that the Arabs abandoned it. During the fight a breeze had sprung up from off the land ; and the pirates, who had clearly had enough of it, made sail away without waiting even to hoist in their remaining boats, which they towed astern. We did not care to chase them, as we might thereby draw a hornet's nest about our ears ; and so, trimming our yards to the wind, we proceeded on our course to Bombay. Our loss in this affair was only three killed and eight wounded, a very small casualty roll when the odds we encountered are considered. As for the enemy, we, of course, never knew how many they lost ; but it was calculated that, considering the crowded

state of their boats, which held at least twenty men each, it could not have been less than sixty men.

For his gallant conduct Lieutenant Gowan received the thanks of the Government of Bombay and of the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The merchants of Bombay presented him with an address appreciative of his courage and capacity, but I never heard that he received any promotion at the hands of his masters assembled in the old house in Leadenhall Street. As for us fo'castle hands, of course we got nothing.

"Boat ahoy!" just then we heard bawled out in our ears. It was from the *Tigris*, which we were approaching; but so interested had my friend Daniel and I been in the "Captain of the Foretop's Yarn," that we had forgotten all about the old brigantine. I need not say that the veteran sailor wet his whistle from another source than the aforesaid bottle, which had run dry long 'ere the conclusion of this truthful narrative of one of the unchronicled achievements of the men of the late Indian navy.





THE "MEGÆRA'S" CREW AT ST. PAUL'S.

A GREAT deal has been said, and a great deal written, about H.M.S. *Megæra*, rather H.M. *late* ship *Megæra*; a Court-martial has been held, and also a Royal Commission of Enquiry, and a great many, if not all, the facts bearing on the case have been elicited. The public and the navy have had what the Yankees call a "scare," and we all hope the lesson will not be thrown away on the dockyard authorities, and certain Admiralty officials, who, though civilians, were as "bumptious" and confident on purely nautical subjects as could be the Admiral of the fleet himself, though "by the same token," that veteran officer (Sir George Rose Sartorius), old as he is, is not above attending lectures at the Royal United Service Institution, and learning lessons from the present generation of naval officers who are better up on the subject of iron-clads, rams, torpedoes, and other novel instruments of naval warfare, which, though some dunderheaded old admirals would contemptuously dismiss with a sneer, as

"newfangled," yet we must know all about it, if we would keep our place in the van of nautical powers. And now to the *Megæra*. I must premise that I am not going to say anything absolutely new, and if you, my dear reader, have read all the newspaper accounts of this country and Australia, including what has appeared in the "Melbourne Argus," and if you have perused the official despatches, and the proceedings of the Court-martial and the Royal Commission, and, in fact, if you know "all about it," why, don't read the following pages, that's all.

The *Megæra* troop-ship was built by Mr. Fairbairn twenty years ago, when iron-shipbuilding was yet in its infancy; her tonnage was nominally 1,391, but the actual carrying power of the ship was 928 tons. Her original cost was £32,000 exclusive of the engines, which being of 560-horse power, would probably cost about £20,000 more, and some extra fittings came to £3,000 or £4,000 more—so that the ship was not expensive pecuniarily, though in the end she was nearly proving so, if the value of human lives can be assessed in pounds, shillings, and pence. The *Megæra* was divided into five water-tight compartments by as many bulkheads, which not only gave transverse strength to the ship, but rendered the compartments water-tight, so that in the event of a leak being sprung in one, the ship might be kept afloat by the other four. We will pass over all accounts of the repairs the *Megæra* received in 1859, and again more latterly, and the history of the ship during the twenty years of her existence, "from her cradle to her grave," as we have not space for these details; suffice it to say, that she was well known in the service as anything but a safe ship, and

had an equally bad name in the sister service as a troop-ship ; indeed, latterly no one who might have been ordered to embark on board the *Megæra* believed in her, but the "long-shore" dockyard folk were either not equally critical, or were more careless.

In 1870, the *Megæra* was in command of Captain Arthur J. Thrupp, and on leaving England for Australia, had on board, including supernumerary seamen for the ships on the Australian station, upwards of 350 officers and men all told. The ship made such bad weather of it in the English Channel, that she had to put into Queenstown. On examination there her bottom was found to be all right, but her ports had not been properly secured, and as she was too heavily laden, the water made its way through them. Reports of her state got to the ears of certain sharp members of the Opposition in Parliament ; questions were asked in that assembly, and were answered, as the result proved, certainly less than more satisfactorily ; Admiral Wilmot, at Queenstown, was directed to report, and did report favourably, on the capabilities of the ship ; and the upshot of it all was that the *Megæra* was relieved of one hundred tons of her cargo, and on the 14th of March, 1871, again set sail on the voyage which was destined to be her last.

The narrative of the voyage runs on in ordinary fashion down to the day on which a leak was discovered. Madeira was reached on the 21st March, and the island of St. Vincent, where a stoppage was made for coal, on the 2nd April. The ship called in at the island of Ascension on the 19th April to land stores, and made the Cape of Good Hope on the 18th of May. A stay of ten days was made at the Cape, and then the *Megæra's* bows were pointed

across the wide and stormy ocean that divides Africa from Australasia.

On the twelfth day out from the Cape—that is, on the 9th of June, the troubles began, for on that day the fatal leak was reported. Up to that time all had gone well, and there had been no sign that anything was amiss, but, henceforward, there was to be nothing but hard work and anxiety of mind for all concerned. As soon as the leak was discovered, the hand-pumps were set going, and baling was also resorted to. At first, the leak was kept under by these means, but after a day or two they proved ineffectual, and at the end of a couple of days more, it was found necessary to get up steam. At the same time the ship's course was altered for St. Paul's Island, which was reached on the 17th of June. Captain Thrupp, having dropped his anchor on the south-west side of the island, opposite to the gap in the centre of the extinct volcano, immediately made an inspection of the ship. A diver was sent down to examine her bottom, and the engineers and officers held a survey. A hole was found in the centre of an iron plate, seven feet from the keel; several iron girders had been carried away, and other plates were found to have become thin from old age or corrosion. An iron plate was fixed over the hole, but the captain and all his officers were of opinion that though the water had been kept under by the steam pumps, yet so rotten was her condition that she was unfit to prosecute the voyage to Australia.

Captain Thrupp accordingly announced to his officers and men that he would remain at the island. A party was sent ashore to search for water, and the landing of provisions and stores was forthwith commenced, and

continued during the whole of the following day, Sunday. On Monday, the 19th June, it blew hard. The surf on the bar, which nearly closed in a land-locked bay, rendered the task of keeping the boats alongside the ship most difficult. Between the time of anchoring on the 17th and the morning of the 19th, three anchors were lost, so that, to take the strain off the cables, it became necessary to steam with the ship's head to wind. Captain Thrupp now came to the determination to beach the *Megæra* on the bar running across the gap in the crater, and accordingly at about one o'clock on the 19th June—the sea, which had been rolling in very heavily, having gone down considerably—the ill-fated ship was run upon her last berth. The landing of the stores was continued, but ten days elapsed before the ship was finally quitted. Tents, made from sails, were pitched, and storing places constructed for the provisions.

St. Paul's is a dreary island of small extent, without a tree or shrub, and was as gloomy an abode as the most ascetic anchorite could desire. The *Megæra's* crew settled down on a shelf of flat ground at the foot of the wall of the crater, near to the gap where the ship was stranded.

The crater is horse-shoe shaped, and the rocks spring up almost sheer from the water's edge to the height of 800 to 900 feet. A dark shadow is at all times cast upon the bay by the lofty wall which hedged it in, but this is the only sheltered part of the island. On the outer side of the crater the ground slopes, and the ascent is more gradual, but there is scarcely any level space anywhere.

Nearly everything was landed from the ship except the cables, some rope, and ammunition. Up to the time she

was abandoned, the water was breaking over the deck in the after part of the ship, though the fore part still remained clear. Houses were built on shore with canvas, turf, and stone, and each little dwelling-place received its name; thus one set of officers called theirs the "Folly." They had to keep up fires, for the temperature was often as low as 44°, and the air was damp. The supply of water was obtained near the summit of the rocks overhead in a small recess, into which it seemed to have drained from ground higher up. A canvas hose, some 800 feet in length, served as a conduit for the water from the recess to the tents on the beach, so that the party had an expeditious and ready means of supplying themselves according to their wants. It rained frequently, when the soft earth round about the cliffs was moistened into mud, rendering walking unpleasant.

Steps were at once taken to attract the notice of passing vessels. A flagstaff, constructed out of a studdingsail-boom, was reared upon the top of the cliff over the camp, 845 feet above the level of the sea, and a great fire was lit whenever a sail was sighted. Several vessels were seen from week to week, and the boats were sent out to draw their attention to the shipwrecked mariners, but they were always from 8 to 10 miles distant, and appeared not to notice the signals made to them. Directly the party landed they were put on half rations, as there was no knowing when they would be released, and after a time the allowance was cut down to a quarter, which would have enabled their stock of provisions to last out till November. Besides the ship's stores, they occasionally obtained goats' flesh, and always had abundance of fish; indeed fish was their staple article of food, and

fishing and boating expeditions their chief occupations. The wild goats were not numerous, but the hunting of them afforded considerable amusement. They had a fife-and-drum band, which was also a source of some entertainment. Perhaps, on the whole, the Robinson Crusoe-like life the crew led would not have been devoid of its charms, but for that ugly spectre, starvation, which, though not yet "staring them in the face," was ever hanging in the background, and intruding himself as one who *might* make their closer acquaintance.

At length, after a dreary month of waiting had passed, they were overjoyed by the sight of a ship coming round the north point of the island close under the rocks. Lieutenant Jones was sent on board, and he found her to be the Dutch ship *Aurora*, Captain Visser, bound from Amsterdam to Sourabaya. The honest skipper stated that when he sighted the island on his proper course, he saw what seemed to be a tree on the highest point of the land. He had passed the island on many occasions, but had never seen a tree upon it before, and the worthy Hollander reasoned with more than Dutch astuteness, that a big tree could not have grown since his last visit two years before. So Captain Visser altered his course, and, standing close in, soon distinguished the English ensign, *union down*, upon a flagstaff; he at once shortened sail, and sailing round to the gap in the crater, came in view of the stranded ship.* Eight barrels of flour were landed from the *Aurora*, which was an opportune addition to the supplies. From that time an extra quantity of

* We trust our Government will in some way express their gratitude to Captain Visser for his humane conduct.

bread was issued all round, and it became no longer necessary to keep the officers and men on short rations, as there was now a guarantee for the early removal of the party from the island. Not long afterwards, a coal ship called at St. Paul's, and the master offered to throw his cargo overboard, to make room for the shipwrecked crew of the *Megæra*, but he asked so extortionate a sum for doing so that Captain Thrupp declined his assistance.

The *Aurora* reached Sourabaya on the 2nd August, and Lieutenant Jones immediately dispatched telegrams to the naval authorities in China and to the British consul at Batavia, who forwarded the news to the Admiralty at home. It was, therefore, by means of the *Aurora* that the safety of the crew of the *Megæra* was effected, and the story that appeared in the Singapore papers, and obtained circulation in England, of the arrival of an open boat at Java from St. Paul's, was a fabrication. Lieutenant Jones proceeded to Batavia, and, on his arrival there, found that orders had been received from the Admiralty to charter a ship to take provisions to the party, and a message from Hong Kong announced the despatch of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer *Malacca* for St. Paul's to bring them away. On the 9th August, the merchant ship *Oberon*, with Lieutenant Jones on board, sailed for St. Paul's with a full stock of provisions; the island was reached on the 26th, and the provisions having been landed, the *Oberon* proceeded on her voyage to England.

Three days later there arrived at the island H.M.S. *Rinaldo*, which had been despatched from Singapore to convey Captain Thrupp and his witnesses to England, for

the court-martial always held when a ship of the Royal Navy is lost.

During the interval between Lieutenant Jones's departure and their rescue, the shipwrecked crew continued to enjoy good health, though signs of weakness had latterly begun to manifest themselves. Apprehensions were entertained of an attack of scurvy, on account of the scarcity of fresh meat and vegetables. As a substitute for the latter, grass (which was plentiful), the leaves of the plantain, and a kind of dandelion were boiled down, and eaten with the other food. Fortunately the scourge of scurvy never manifested itself; there was also no sickness, notwithstanding the exposure to which all hands were at first exposed, and not a single man of the *Megæra's* crew left his bones on the dreary rock. A marine, named Deffren, however, had a miraculous escape from death. One night, when stationed at the water-spring, he missed his footing, and tumbled over the edge of the cliff. His comrades searched all night, though without success; but when morning dawned he was discovered lying prostrate some distance down the cliff. Strange to relate, his fall had been arrested by a single tuft of grass! Deffren remained in a state of insensibility for a week, but ultimately recovered.

Several hot springs were discovered on the island, and, in one spot, where steam arose from the earth, the thermometer marked 196°. Inside the crater were patches of greasy clay, which the seamen found to be an excellent substitute for soap.

The party were eighty days on the island before the embarkation was completed, and on the 30th August, amidst a heavy gale, they witnessed the final break-up of

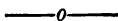
the *Megæra*. The spectacle is described by those who witnessed it as "thrilling," for in the height of the storm, with an accompaniment of thunder and lightning, the hull of the old ship, so lately their home, was lifted from its bed, swept over the bar, and smashed to a thousand pieces. At the same time, as if to mark the catastrophe, a huge rupture was made in the cliff opposite the camping ground, and masses of rock were cast down into the sea.

In the meantime the *Malacca* and *Rinaldo* were hastening to the rescue of the castaways. It was on the 5th August that Captain Bernard, of the former ship, received a telegram while lying at Hong Kong, and, two days afterwards the *Malacca* left that port fully equipped for her errand of mercy. She arrived at Singapore on the 14th August, and sailing again on the following day, remained at Anger for a few hours on the 18th; at half-past six a.m., on the 30th of August, the *Malacca* arrived off St. Paul's, where she found H.M.S. *Rinaldo*, which had only cast anchor on the preceding night. On the morning of the 30th the weather was cloudy, with strong breezes, and a high westerly sea running; and the *Malacca* had to stand off the island again in consequence of her anchor dragging, the flukes and stock having been carried away. The weather throughout the day which witnessed the last of the *Megæra* was singularly tempestuous, and altogether too stormy to admit of any communication with the shore. The gale blew hard from north to north-west, and the sea was so heavy that the ship laboured heavily, and shipped large bodies of water. The *Rinaldo* had also to succumb to the weather, and, having parted both cables, stood out to sea on the same day. On August 31, the weather did not show much sign of "taking up," and the *Malacca* bore

up again for the anchorage ; but there was too much sea on to admit of communicating with the shore. On the following day, the storm having spent itself, the steamer got in shore, and anchored in fourteen fathoms of water. The necessary arrangements for embarking the baggage and stores which had been landed from the *Megæra*, were soon instituted, and the work progressed satisfactorily until September 2nd, when it was abruptly terminated. At ten a.m. on that day the chain parted in a furious squall, and once more the *Malacca* had to stand out to sea. This second gale continued to rage all that day with increasing severity, and at ten p.m. a tremendous sea struck the steamer, smashed the starboard life-boat which hung at the davits, carried away part of the port bulwark, and swept the decks. When the weather had moderated, Captain Bernard again stood in, and no further hindrance of any sort being experienced, the embarkation was completed without delay. At half-past four p.m. on the 5th September, the *Malacca* weighed anchor, and, after exchanging signals with the *Rinaldo*, steamed away for King George's Sound, where she arrived on the night of the 13th. After remaining there to coal, she left for Melbourne early in the morning of the 22nd September, and arrived at Port Phillip on the 4th October. H.M.S. *Rinaldo* took Captain Thrupp, eight officers, and ten men to King George's Sound, whence they proceeded overland by Point de Galle and Suez to England. These officers and men gave evidence on Captain Thrupp's court-martial, which, as is well known, resulted in the honourable acquittal of the captain of the *Megæra*.



FIRE IN A COOLIE SHIP.



SOME few years since, the European public in Hong Kong were shocked by the occurrence of one of those tragedies that occasionally take place on the high seas, and cause a thrill of horror in the hearts of all to whose knowledge they may come. Now, perhaps, it may be a terrible shipwreck with a heavy loss of life, as in the case of the *Royal Charter*, and a hundred other ships ; again, perhaps a gallant vessel may leave port, and *never be heard of again*—that most terrible and mysterious of all fates—as witness in recent years the ill-fated *City of Boston*. Another fearful visitation is a fire at sea, and the name of the *Kent* will at once occur as a typical case ; it is of such a catastrophe I propose to write now, and as my tale is almost literally true, the interest will not flag on account of a certain sameness that must exist in the incidents. They are none of our creating, and the naked horrors of the scene are in no way lessened by the simple language in which the narrator, a Chinese coolie, details them.

It is well known that a system of so-called coolie-emigration exists in China, the Fiji and other islands,

which is scarcely, if at all, less nefarious than the open traffic of slaves, now, happily, no longer existing.

This emigration of the natives of the class from which coolies are hired is only nominally voluntary, and it is to be hoped that the recent murder of Bishop Patteson will draw attention to this latest phase of dealing in flesh and blood: If such be the case, and the British Government, in concert, if necessary, with foreign governments, and the legislatures of Queensland and other colonies, puts a stop to the iniquity, the good bishop will not have died in vain, but will be regarded as true a martyr to a righteous cause as any of his persuasion who have died at the stake or on the rack.

A few years since, a fine screw-steamer, called the *Dolores Urgarte* was engaged in conveying coolies from China to Peru, but after making some successful voyages at length ended her disreputable career by falling a prey to a fire that broke out in an inexplicable way on board her.

The *Dolores Urgarte* was about 800 tons burden, and being a powerful steamer was schooner-rigged; she had a numerous crew, and a strong guard was kept day and night under arms to keep in subjection the coolies. This was a very necessary precaution, as in more than one instance the deluded wretches have been known to rise upon the ship's crew, when the fact first dawned upon them that they were in reality slaves, and the legal steps which they had foolishly considered only bound them to an apprenticeship were a mere blind to hide the life-long thralldom that awaited them the moment they set their foot on shore.

On this her last voyage the *Dolores Urgarte* sailed with

600 coolies on board, but she had not left the port of Macao three days when it was discovered that she was in flames. The Europeans took to the boats, and left to their fate the wretched coolies, who perished almost to a man. One of the survivors, Leung Ashen, on being landed at Hong Kong, gave the following account of the catastrophe and of the means by which he escaped the fate that overtook so many of his countrymen :—

“I am a native of Sunning ; I am twenty years of age, and have no employment. A few days ago a cousin of mine took me to Macao, as he said, to get me some work. He lodged me in a foreigner's house. There I stayed three days. I was then taken to a barracoon,* where I stopped two days. I was next brought before an officer, in whose presence an interpreter told me that I was to go to Peru to work for four dollars a month ; that if I refused to go I was to be sent to the chain-gang for six years, and thereafter to be put into a dungeon for two years. I had no option, therefore, but to put my name to a printed form, which had Chinese and European writing on it. A seal was then affixed, and I was paid eight dollars in silver, and received also two suits of clothes, a wadded jacket, and a pair of shoes. No bedding of any kind was given me, not even a mat. I was then marched into a ship with several hundred others. Some foreigners who guarded us were armed with muskets and drawn swords ; they numbered about one to every ten men. We were all put into a large hold, and the gratings of the hatchways were always kept on ; there were two

* I need hardly remind the reader that the term barracoon, as used on the West Coast of Africa, is applied to a defensible building constructed for the detention of slaves.

of these hatchways, and each was fitted with an iron grating. After the ship sailed we were not allowed on deck at any time, the only exceptions being twelve men, who were told off to act as cooks, and therefore had to attend at the galley fire. The hatch gratings were only opened to lower down our meals. Nobody was allowed to smoke in the hold, which was lighted at night by five lights kept constantly burning. There were about ten foreigners acting as sentries at a time in the hold; they carried swords and rattans, but I never saw them use the rattans. They were on duty night and day. The fare on board the ship was inferior to what I was accustomed to at Sunning; the treatment was good, except that we were not allowed on deck for any purpose. We could play at dominoes or dice in the hold.

"On the third day after the ship sailed, shortly after our breakfast, a fire broke out on board. The smoke came into our hold in a great volume, and at this time there was no foreigner on duty over us. The smoke came in very thick, and a great many were suffocated. More than one hour after the smoke first came into our hold the hatch grating was torn off by somebody—by one of the cooks, I believe. We then all made a rush for the hatchway, and a terrible scene, a struggle for life and death, ensued. I was partially suffocated when I got to the hatchway, and could not climb up it. Some Chinamen pulled me up it. By this time the fire had reached the hatchway, and my face was severely burnt in my attempts to get up on deck. When I came up, the whole ship, from the mainmast to the stern, was a mass of flames. I was holding to the anchor chain, and had seated myself on the anchor, which was dangling

at the side of the ship, over the bows. When the fire reached the woodwork which held the anchor chain, I was tumbled into the sea with the anchor, which was released from the projecting beam to which it had been secured.

"I could swim, and on rising to the surface, as soon as I had collected my senses a little, I swam to a burnt spar which was floating on the water. There were several other coolies holding on to this spar besides me.

"I should say that the ship was burning for a whole hour between the time when I came out of the hold and the anchor fell into the water. When I first came on deck after our release by the cooks, I remarked one boat in the far distance making away as fast as it could. It appeared full of men, who I think were Europeans, as they could pull well, and none of us Chinamen knew how to use an oar. On first reaching the spar I was very much confused, and was partly insensible from the effects of the burns. The salt water pained my wounds greatly, and I felt weak and exhausted.

"There was a larger spar floating some distance on the water, and a great many men were holding on to it. The smaller spar, to which I and about ten of my countrymen were clinging, was carried away by a strong current, and we soon lost sight of the large spar and the people it supported. We were carried away much faster by the current, as we were fewer in number, and our spar was much smaller."

The coolie, Leung Ashen, then describes how, after being some hours on the spar, they saw a small reef, and gradually approached it as the tide drifted the spar towards it. He appears to have been a strong swimmer, and, notwithstanding all the suffering and fatigue he had

undergone from being so many hours in the water, on observing that the spar would only pass near the reef, and not be stranded on it, he determined to make for it and await his chance of being rescued on terra firma, which was better than falling a prey to any passing shark. On enquiry, he found that none of his fellow coolies could swim, so he resolved to make the venture by himself. Quitting his hold of the spar, he struck out for and soon reached the reef. The spar, still moving with the current, was soon borne out of sight with its living freight.

On landing on the reef, he found it to be only a small patch of shingle about 120 feet long and 30 wide, a mere strip reclaimed from the ocean, with nothing living on it, not even a bird or shell-fish that he could eat; but such as it was, it gave him a resting-place for his wearied frame, and he was thankful. Just managing to crawl a few feet above what he considered high-water mark, he laid himself down and soon fell into a profound slumber. He did not know how long he lay sleeping on his strange bed, when suddenly he was aroused by a peculiar sensation. Springing to his feet, what was his horror to find that the sea was rising and would soon overwhelm him; the reef was covered at high tide, which was rapidly flowing, and would soon convert the soft plot of shingle into the bed of the ocean. Seized with despair, he was at first so much overcome that he could not move, and appeared as though bereft of reason; he then went frantically about the reef to look for something that could swim, but its narrow limits were soon searched and searched in vain. Finally he cast his eager glance to the horizon, to scan it for a passing sail, but in vain. When

all hope seemed fled, and the tide had risen above his knees as he stood in the most elevated spot on the reef, he discovered, floating not far off, a hencoop, one doubtless belonging to the ill-fated *Dolores Urgarte*. He immediately struck out, gained it, and once more found himself on the wide waters, this time without even a companion. But he was hopeful, and thanks to the long sleep he had enjoyed, his energies, both bodily and mental, were better able to cope with the horrors of his position. He must have been a plucky fellow, this young Chinese coolie ; one who carried into action the old naval saying, "Never say die, while there's a shot in the locker!"

Nothing could be more soul-depressing than his situation or his prospects. Any moment a shark might show above water his ugly black fin, and then his brave fight for life would be over ; or even if he could hold on for a few hours or even a few days, for which he prepared as he mounted astraddle the hencoop, what then ? The struggle was only prolonged, as, unless a ship hove in sight and made out so small a thing as a hencoop, he would at length have to succumb to starvation or fatigue.

But he was providentially saved. Before night closed in, a fishing junk passing that way sighted him, and he was picked up and taken on board.

Leung Ashen says, "The junkmen wanted me to give them money before they would pick me up, I had some money with me, five dollars, the balance of my advance of eight dollars at the barracoon. I paid them these five dollars, and then the junkmen picked me up."

People in England will scarcely credit this poor coolie's statement, as happily our seafaring classes are among the most unselfish and noble-hearted of the community, but

to us who have been in China it will appear the most natural thing possible, and eminently characteristic of the Chinese.

On giving information regarding the burning of the *Dolores Urgarte*, and the débris and stores that were floating about on the scene of her destruction, the junkmen, like vultures that scent carrion, steered for the scene of the disaster to see what they could fish up. They soon came upon signs of the ill-fated ship, and passed four of the coolies clinging to a spar, but though they sailed up to them, these monsters actually had the hardheartedness to refuse to take them on board, "because," says the rescued Chinaman, "they had no money. The junkmen pushed them back, and they had to remain on the spar. I do not know the number of the junk. After passing these poor men, the junkmen went on farther, picking up any wrecked property they could find. The junk took in nine other men on the way, and from all of them they got money." There were ten other coolies floating on a spar a long way off, but the obdurate junkmen left them to their fate. "The junkmaster," continues the coolie, "adopted two of the men he had saved as his sons, whom he retained on board; but on our arrival at Hong Kong he sent the rest ashore at the same time that I was landed. My treatment on board the fishing junk was good, but I could not eat, as the pain from my burns was very great. This is the fourth day I have been here. When the junk arrived, the men sent me ashore in a boat and took no more care of me. I could hardly walk, and did not know where to go, as I am a perfect stranger here. I walked on to a stonecutter's shed, but the men refused to shelter me for the night. I walked on and

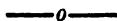
came to a bridge, and stopped under the arch for the night. I went farther up the hill, and came to another stonecutter's shed. The men admitted me, but they gave me nothing to eat, nor anything to lie down upon. They told me to lie upon some grass. I stopped there two days. Yesterday evening I left this shed, and came to the door of a shop ; as it was raining, I lay down in front of it, under the awning, but the shopkeeper turned me away. A seamstress took pity on me, and advised an elderly man to take care of me. This man, who received me last night, wanted to adopt me as his son, but his own son prevented him."

But his miseries were now nearly at an end, and on the following morning Leung Ashen fell into the hands of the Hong Kong police, who clothed and fed him, and treated him with kindness ; he was taken before a magistrate, who took his depositions, which form a portion of the details of this narrative.





FISHING FOR AN ALLIGATOR.



THERE is little difference between the crocodile of the Ganges and the alligator of South American rivers, beyond the conformation of the mouth and some structural details which would only be of interest to the naturalist. It is curious to watch them floating down the broad and turbid stream of the Ganges, looking for all the world like a log of wood, as they bask lazily, or sleep profoundly on the surface of "Holy Gunga;" and it is not less curious to mark how rapidly they disappear, when from the deck of your "budgerow" you lodge a ball in the gaping mouth or the soft folds of the throat, when the water is lashed into a whirlpool slightly tinged with blood, by a whisk of the mighty tail.

The method adopted on the banks of the Esequibo and the Orinoco are far different, and we will detail the course the Indians pursue when they angle for an alligator or "cayman," as the animal is called in that part of the world.



Fishing for an Alligator

You cannot use the ordinary iron shark-hook, employed in deep-sea fishing. First of all, a hook is made as follows :—Four pieces of tough, hard wood, a foot long, and of the thickness of the little finger, and barbed at ends, are tied in a bundle round a stout rope ; it is evident that the more the alligator tugs, the deeper will he fix the barbs into his throat. The hook, when baited with a fish, is placed or suspended on a board, which is carried out in a canoe about forty yards into the river—we will suppose the Orinoco—which at its mouth is almost like a sea. The board is then moored to the bottom of the river by means of a stone fastened at the end of a stout cord, and then the rope, having the hook at the end, is brought ashore and made fast to a tree on the bank. As in catching sharks at sea, the Indians have, if possible, a good length of chain between the hook and this rope, for were this precaution not adopted, the cayman, like Johnny Shark, would snap the stoutest cord in two, and sail off with the bait, leaving you on the bank to lament your loss, like a “greenhorn” as you would be. It is now sunset, with the bright, cloudless sky of the tropics ; the winds are still, but the animals of the forest and the fish in the river give unmistakable signs of life. A jaguar would growl unpleasantly near, and the owl would screech, or perhaps some denizen of the water, eager to vary the monotony of “water, water, everywhere,” would just spring into the air and see what it was like, though the dull splash with which he returned to his native element, showed what “a fish out of water” thought of it.

To vary these sounds of nature, the cayman himself would turn up his nose and emit a singular and startling

note unlike everything, and which, when first heard, would at once elicit an enquiry as to whence it proceeded.

It is like a suppressed sigh, but bursts forth so suddenly, and is of such volume that it may be heard in a still night, such as this one, fully a mile off. You must not expect because a cayman is here, and even because he approaches and sniffs at the bait, that he is going to swallow it and give you the gratification of hauling him ashore without any further trouble. No, indeed, not he. Like his prototype in malevolence and voraciousness, the tiger on land, or the shark in salt water, ("tiger of the sea," as he is well called,) the cayman displays great acuteness and cunning, and will often keep you for hours dancing attendance on him on the bank, and then perhaps will succeed in snapping off the bait from the hook. You must keep quiet and have patience, even should you have to replenish the hook more than once. Sometimes two or three nights may be passed in a vain attempt to inveigle a single cayman. But at length you have the gratification of hooking one of these monsters, and then, with "a strong pull, and a long pull, and a pull altogether," you and your Indian assistants will not have much trouble in hauling him to land.

Waterton, the famous naturalist and traveller, in his "Wanderings," written about fifty years ago, gives a graphic account of an occurrence that took place when he was engaged in catching a cayman; the incident has been characterized as a "traveller's tale," and without the bounds of credibility, but it has received a certain confirmation from the narrative of a Mr. Bernan, a clergyman, who spent some years in missionary labour

in the interior of British Guiana. Mr. Waterton once hooked a cayman about ten and a half feet in length, and proceeded with his party of three Indians—his servant called Yan, a negro named Daddy Quashi, and James, a European—to drag him out of the water and then secure him. The Indians at once declined to have a hand in the matter, saying the creatures were very vindictive, and would worry them. Daddy Quashi appears to have been an arrant coward, and suggested that application should be had to the guns with which the animal could be easily despatched. This proposal roused Waterton's ire, for he had come to the Esequibo purposely to get a perfect specimen, and did not care for any bullet holes to disfigure its body. The Indians, after some consultation, suggested that a dozen or so of arrows should be discharged into him, and then they would willingly bring him to bank. But the enthusiastic naturalist was equally adverse to the adoption of this course from a like reason, and so he was at his wit's end. There was the cayman, but how was he to get him ashore alive, and without injury to his ugly carcases?

Mr. Waterton continues: "I now walked up and down the sand, revolving a dozen projects in my head. The canoe was at a considerable distance, and I ordered the people to bring it round to the place where we were. The mast was eight feet long, and not much thicker than my wrist. I took it out of the canoe, and wrapped the sail round the end of it. Now it appeared clear to me that if I went down upon one knee, and held the mast in the same position that the soldier holds the bayonet when rushing to the charge, I could force it down the cayman's throat should he come open-mouthed at me. When this

was told to the Indians they brightened up, and said they would help me to pull him out of the river.

"Daddy Quashi hung in the rear. I showed him a large Spanish knife, which I always carried in the waist-band of my trousers; it spoke volumes to him, and he shrugged up his shoulders in absolute despair. The sun was just peeping over the high forests on the eastern hills, as if coming to look on, and bid us act with becoming fortitude. I placed all the people at the end of the rope, and told them to pull till the cayman appeared on the surface of the water; and then, should he plunge, to slacken the rope, and let him go again into the deep.

"I now took the mast of the canoe in my hand (the sail being tied round the end of the mast) and sunk down upon one knee, about four yards from the water's edge, determining to thrust it down his throat, in case he gave me an opportunity. I certainly felt somewhat uncomfortable in this situation. The people pulled the cayman to the surface; he plunged furiously as soon as he arrived in these upper regions, and immediately went below again on their slackening the rope. They pulled again, and out he came. This was an interesting moment. I kept my position firmly, with my eye fixed steadfastly on him. By the time the cayman was within two yards of me, I saw he was in a state of fear and perturbation. I instantly dropped the mast, sprung up, and jumped on his back, turning half round as I vaulted, so that I gained my seat with my face in a right position. I immediately seized his fore-legs, and, by main force, twisted them on his back; thus they served me for a bridle." Mr. Waterton then describes how the cayman, on recovering

from the first impulse of surprise and indignation at the trick played on him, began to plunge furiously, and lashed the sand with his powerful tail. He anticipates the question which would naturally recur to an ordinary mind, how he managed to keep his seat, by the intimation that he "hunted some years with Lord Darlington's fox-hounds." But though the accomplished traveller continued to bestride, surely, the strangest quadruped ever ridden by a fox-hunter, or "any other man," yet the plunging and the lashing out of the huge tail rendered the seat, to say the least, very uncomfortable, with the moral certainty that should he pitch off he might disappear into the cavernous jaws of the outraged cayman. The people were in such ecstasies at the singular position of their master, that they yelled themselves hoarse with exultation, thereby drowning the voice of Mr. Waterton, who was urging them to pull himself and his steed further inland, as should the rope break, the cayman would inevitably betake itself to its native element, and there gain relief from its unwelcome rider. At length the people dragged the pair some forty yards up the bank, and the cayman soon after becoming exhausted, "caved in," like the "coon" in the Yankee story. His jaws were now tied up, his fore-legs secured, and after a final struggle the brute was dragged off, despatched, and dissected at his leisure by the plucky Englishman.

As I before said, this tale excited some controversy and much incredulity from the English public of that day, and certainly if not true, it is, as the Italians say, "*ben trovato*."

The incident *might* be true, and so many statements of other famous travellers—as Bruce for instance—

have been ridiculed, only to be verified by subsequent observers, that it would be as foolish to reject it contemptuously as to swallow everything stated by enthusiastic naturalists without the qualifying "*grano salis*." On the other hand, certain travellers of good social standing—the case of Gordon Cumming and Du Chaillu will suggest themselves—have been accused of "drawing the long bow," perhaps with some truth. Mr. Charles Waterton, of Walton Hall, in Yorkshire, was a gentleman of good fortune; and, in pursuit of his favourite study of natural history, undertook in the year 1812 his first journey through the wilds of Demerara and Guiana. Owing to the dense vegetation, and the swampy nature of the soil, travelling on foot was out of the question, and he performed his first journey chiefly in a canoe. Driven to England by fever and ague, this adventurous traveller, after three years passed in recruiting his health, proceeded to Pernambuco in Brazil, and then to Cayenne in Guiana, whence he again started into the interior. Once more fever forced him to return to his native land, only, however, to return for a third journey into Guiana, and a tour into the far west of America.

I have mentioned that the incident of the ride on the cayman's back has received a certain corroboration from a Mr. Bernan. This missionary states that Erie, an Indian who accompanied him in his expeditions on the Esequibo, related to him that one of his countrymen, who had climbed up a tree on the bank of a dark creek in order to shoot with arrows the caymans as they passed beneath him, fell off the branch while drawing the bow. With great presence of mind, the native, who alighted on the back of an alligator, clasped his hands round the

body of the brute, and in this position was dragged through the water across the creek; the alligator climbed up through the bush, lacerating his rider's back, but, not disengaging himself from the unaccustomed burden, returned to the creek, and, once more crossing it, tried to climb up the bank. The Indian took the opportunity, while the cayman was laboriously dragging itself up the steep sides of the river, to throw himself backward into the water, and swimming across, reached the opposite bank in safety. "I have seen," says Mr. Bernan, "as many as ten alligators at one time basking themselves in the sun, and swimming on the water like logs of wood. They are afraid of men, and quite harmless, provided they are left unmolested; but when bereaved of their young they are very ferocious."

In another part of his book, however, the same writer gives an anecdote of a man who fell from a tree into the water, and whose leg was bitten off by one of these animals, so that he bled to death in a few minutes. The writer of this paper can also speak of the ferocity of the crocodile of the Ganges, for he knows an instance of the nativeservantof arelative, who, while bathing in that river, was carried down bodily by one of them in the presence of his fellow-servant, and was never seen again. Such incidents, too, are of no uncommon occurrence in other rivers of India frequented by crocodiles.



THE PERILS OF BEAR HUNTING.

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NO species of sport requires a cooler head or more accurate aim than bear shooting. The animal is as fierce and strong as a tiger, though happily he is more clumsy and slow in his movements than the savage quadruped which haunts the jungles of Bengal. Still, bears are revengeful, and possess much more cunning than they are generally credited with. A story is told of a peasant of Lithuania, who, having lost a cow, which had been seized by a bear, went with his boy to waylay the depredator. Presently up came a large bear and began to eat the cow. The peasant fired, and the animal rolled over on its back, having received the bullet in its body. The man, believing it to be dead, left his lurking-place, but was instantly attacked most furiously by the wounded beast. The boy ran off screaming for assistance, and soon brought to the spot a number of the neighbours, who, however, on their arrival, found that the unfortunate man was quite dead. They carried the body to the cottage, and the bear hung on their rear. When they had deposited their mournful charge, the revengeful



The Perils of Bear Hunting.

brute actually came to the door, and made efforts to force its way in, but happily growing faint with loss of blood, it expired on the spot.

"The best points to hit a bear," writes Lloyd in his "Field Sports of the North of Europe," are in the forehead, the breast, under the ear, or at the back of the shoulders; bullets lodged in any other part of the body produce no immediate effect. If the snow is deep, and the bear is crossing you, aim low—very low; indeed, it will often be found needful to fire right into the snow, in order to hit the heart of the beast."

A well-known propensity of the bear is to stop and examine everything dropped by a fugitive, and this singular habit has afforded the chance of escape in numberless instances. The following is an example in point. In 1860, a Hull whaler was moored to a field of ice, when one of the crew, sighting a huge bear which was prowling about, set out with his gun to shoot it. He came within gunshot, when the bear, with the utmost coolness, turned to the sailor and looked him steadily in the face. Jack thought to scare the beast with shouts and gesticulations, but Bruin was not to be scared in that childish way. The man now began to feel uncomfortable, and, taking aim, fired; he missed the bear, which immediately advanced upon him. Jack, thinking discretion the better part of valour, now took to his heels, and he was right, for with an empty gun he would not have had the ghost of a chance with an Arctic bear. Presently he threw down his gun, which "handicapped" him heavily in the race for life, and the bear coming up, proceeded to smell it, paw it, and bite it, until finding it too tough for his digestion, he bethought him of the man who would afford

a more tender meal. So Bruin started off in chase, when the fugitive dropped a mitten, which had the desired effect of detaining for a time the bear. But he was soon again in chase, when the second mitten attracted his notice. Having worried this to his heart's content, the brute again started off, and quickly gained ground. Jack now bethought him of his hat, which he flung to the bear, which could be distinctly heard in the rear. Once more the sailor gained a respite, as the animal, puzzled what to make of the furry head gear, tore it to pieces between his teeth and paws. But the safety of Jack was now assured, for his shipmates, armed with guns, had come to the rescue. The bear now stood still, as if calculating his chance of contending successfully with so formidable an enemy ; the scrutiny was not reassuring, and as prudence dictated a relinquishment of the pursuit, he wheeled about in a dignified manner, and was suffered to effect an honourable and unchecked retreat.

No animal displays a greater affection for its young than the female bear, and she will not only fight for her cubs, but will not desert them in the extremity of danger. Captain Phipps tells an affecting anecdote bearing on this devotion for her young of the she-bear, of which he was himself a witness during his journey to the North Pole. "A she-bear and her two large cubs, attracted by the scent of some blubber, began to devour it with great voracity, when some of his companions fired at them, wounding the dam and killing the cubs. The distress of the mother was most painful to behold ; though severely wounded she crawled to the spot where her cubs lay, and placed before each of them a piece of the blubber. Finding that they did not eat it, she tried to raise them, making

at the same time the most heartrending moans. She then went to a slight distance and called them, looking back to see if they answered the summons, but failing in her effort she returned and licked their wounds. This she did three or four times ; still finding that the cubs took no notice of her, the forlorn mother walked round and round them, pawing and licking them with such maternal tenderness, that no hen gathering her brood under her wings could be more solicitous of their welfare. Convinced at last that they were dead, she appeared as though weeping awhile in silent sorrow, and then burst into an agony of woe. She howled as if her heart would break, and then, raising her head towards the ship, looked at the men more in sorrow than in anger, as though she had said : ' See what you have done. You have robbed me of my cubs, and I can never again know happiness.' Then, struck with a volley of musket balls, she fell between her two cubs and died, licking their wounds."

I once sailed with a man who had been engaged for many years whaling in the Arctic regions ; he used always to say he preferred the intense cold of the regions around the North Pole to the tropical heat of the Persian Gulf or Red Sea, yet to my knowledge, he on three different occasions renewed his period of three years' service in ships of the Indian Navy. While an A. B. he used to spin to his shipmates of the forecastle sensational stories of shooting and hunting walruses and bears, and being one of those who by their account never do anything like ordinary mortals without meeting with unheard-of incidents, he was a great source of amusement. Rawlins was a good-natured fellow and a good seaman, so that eventually he was promoted to the grade of

quartermaster, and when keeping watch on the quarter-deck he used to amuse the officers, and while away many a dreary harbour watch by his stories. I remember one of the toughest of these yarns. It seems that while whaling near Kotzebue Inlet, to the northward of Behring's Straits, he was, according to his own account, left behind by his ship, which returned to the southward without him. I forget why this piece of ill-luck befell him, but I know the reasons were given in full detail, and that these were very ingeniously formed. However, he was fortunate enough to fall in with the Esquimaux, who took him in and treated him very kindly. The village to which he was conducted was situated near to a fine stream of water flowing from a large bed of thawing snow. The tents of the village consisted of skins loosely stretched over a few spars of drift wood, and were neither wind nor water tight. They were about six feet square and only four feet in height, and were always kept in a filthy state. The natives* testified their hospitality by placing before him several dishes, among which their two choicest were the entrails of a seal and a lump of coagulated blood. Rawlins turned away disgusted from these luxuries, but he remained long enough by his account to esteem them as highly as his entertainers. Another favourite dish among these people was the raw flesh of the whale, cut into uninviting lumps, with an equal distribution of black and white fat.

On the evening of his arrival the natives testified their delight by an exhibition of music and dancing; the former was caused by striking a bone on a tambourine,

* For a detailed account of these natives, see Captain Beechey's "Narrative of the Voyage of the *Blossom*."

and the musician, who was also the principal dancer, marked time, while first the youths and then the young women joined in the dance. Soon the young children came out of their sleeping places, and every one joined in the performance—that is, all but the baby, which lay in the corner contentedly sucking a large piece of seal blubber.

It was the day after his arrival that John Rawlins met with the adventure that nearly cost him his life. Anxious to evince his prowess to his hosts, and gain the affection of an Esquimaux beauty, with whom, sailor-like, he fell in love at first sight, he set out by himself, and borrowing a gun, proposed to himself to kill at least one bear, and bring the skin to his *inamorata*. He had not been long out when turning the corner of an iceberg he saw two close to him. This was more than John bargained for altogether, so he took to his heels. The bears gave chase, and he was glad to run for some rocks a little way off. His smartness in running aloft stood him in good stead now, and he was congratulating himself in having outwitted his anticipated prey, when suddenly he descried above him, coming down the rocks, a third bear. Here was ill-luck, and John was on the point of abandoning himself to be eaten alive, when he heard shouting below, and was reassured by the sight of some of his friends, who, anticipating that he would get into trouble, had quietly followed him with their guns. The bears, according to Rawlins, very properly descended the cliffs, and were summarily disposed of. So far John Rawlins's "tough" yarn.

In the spring following his sojourn among the Esquimaux, an American whaler came up to Kotzebue Sound,

and Rawlins was glad to return to civilisation again. He then abandoned the frigid for the torrid zone, and so it happened that we on board *H.M.S. Plunger*, had the advantage of his services, accompanied with detailed accounts of his experiences among the Esquimaux, and the wonderful deeds he wrought among the Arctic bears, walruses, and whales. Truly, John Rawlins in his humble way rivalled Baron Munchausen of lying notoriety.





A ROMANCE OF THE SEA.

DURING my first voyage as a naval cadet in the Hon. E. I. Co's service, I was appointed to the foretop as junior midshipman. The *Blazer* was a crack frigate, and our officers, from the captain downwards, were all smart seamen, who had seen considerable service in various parts of the world. As the sea-saying is, the old frigate was kept "clean as a new pin." The boatswain used to say with pride, "The Queen might have eaten her dinner off any part of her decks." She certainly was a creditable craft to all on board, though perhaps her most gracious Majesty might have demurred to dining on such a substitute for the mahogany tables of Windsor.

"White was the glossy deck, without a stain
Where on the watch the staid lieutenant walks.
Look on that part which sacred doth remain
For the lone chieftain, who majestic stalks,
Silent and fear'd by all."

How we used to enjoy the racing up aloft with the men on the lieutenant of the watch giving the order "Lay aloft," though it required the exercise of all one's phy-

sical powers to avoid being swung off the ratlines; for, as officers of the tops we midshipmen had to lead the way, and the seamen running up after us in a thick shoal caused the whole of the rigging to which the ratlines were attached to swing about and vibrate, no matter how "taut" it had been set up, to such an extent that it required considerable practice to enable youngsters such as we were to retain our foothold, and at the same time to "show the way" to the practical sailors who were running up behind us. We were pretty observant of the precept that obtains in the navy, when "reefing topsails," or "furling sails," of "one hand for the service and one for yourself," but I don't think many of us made use of the "lubbers' hole," but clambered fairly round the "futtock shrouds," a feat which is easy enough after you have once mastered it, but which, I think, all old salts will agree with me, is, for a "greenhorn," difficult of accomplishment at the first trial, reminding those, indeed, who have lately escaped school and the schoolmaster's cane, of the redoubtable Pons Asinorum, that bugbear to all young schoolboys. It was an era in my naval career when I first succeeded in creeping round the rim of the top; this in one of the old frigates is no slight task, for the diameter of the top is very great, as in the old wars they were used for a vantage ground for sharpshooters much more than nowadays, when "small-arm men," as they call them at sea, hardly dare show their noses above decks for fear of rifle-bullets.

The captain of the top of my watch was a fine smart seaman, and took pleasure in teaching me knotting and splicing, and the other mechanical mysteries of

craft. While up aloft assisting him in "turning in" afresh some of the "dead eyes" of the topmast rigging, which required over-hauling, the captain of the top used to "spin yarns" for the edification of myself and another young cadet, my "chum" and topmate. Most of them I have, of course, forgotten; but of some I have still a lively recollection, and in particular of the one I am now about to relate; "Catharpine" often spoke of it as being an episode in his own personal experience, and also as forming the vehicle that rendered him one of the "happiest of men," in the general acceptance of the superlative of that adjective. He never tired of giving us any particulars, for which, when other topics of conversation failed, we never wearied of asking him.

The hero of my story, "Catharpine," was a tall stalwart fellow, with a fine, frank manner and face. His messmates often called him in fun the "Lady Killer," or "Handsome Jack;" and, truth to say, had the honest sailor been rigged in clothes the handiwork of Mr. Poole, of Savile Row, and turned adrift in St. James Street, he would have created a mild excitement among the *habitués* of that thoroughfare, or the fashionable loungers at the bow windows of White's, always supposing that he could exchange that free-and-easy, rolling gait, reminding one of a frigate in a heavy sea, which becomes so well a man-o'-war's man, but would look out of place in a club dandy, for the stately yet careless saunter of, for instance, that "*ne plus ultra*" of swells, "Fitz Noodle" of the "Heavies," as that warrior slowly walks down the steps of the "Rag," lifting his feet as if they were booted and spurred, in the peculiar manner cavalry-men affect even in the drawing-room, a fashion of walking which

always reminds me of a game-cock strutting about with very long spurs. I have been messmate on board ship, when going out to India, with dragoon officers, and it used to cause us sailors and officers in her Majesty's foot regiments infinite diversion to watch some of these said dragoons,—very "heavy" men, indeed, they were, and capital good fellows, too,—trying their utmost while the ship was knocking about in a sea-way, to preserve a dignified equilibrium on their feet, and at the same time to keep up, as if it were a matter of life and death, the stalking motion to which I have referred.

Talking of handsome sailors reminds me that on board this same ship there was doing duty "before the mast," certainly the best-looking fellow I ever saw. This pre-eminence all the military officers allowed; and often have I heard a friend of mine, now holding one of the highest staff appointments in India, and himself a very good-looking fellow, aver with admiration as we marked this man's faultless figure, graceful bearing, and regular features, that such a *tout ensemble* as his, "barring the rig," as Paddy would say, would create a sensation in Rotten Row among the "upper ten."

It was rather ludicrous, but on one occasion, when Major E. was expressing himself to this effect, the handsome Jack Tar, quite unconscious of the admiration not un-mixed with envy which his appearance excited among the passengers, turned round to one of the ordinary seamen, in his capacity of a "leading hand," and sang out to him in these words,—“I say, Bill, just give that 'ere 'wiol' block a lick o' warnish, will yer?” “Ah!” added my friend, with a smile, “I never knew the full truth of the Eastern saying that ‘silence is golden,’ till that man

opened his mouth." However, to commence Catharpine's narrative.

"When the frigate *Implacable* was suddenly ordered to sea from Portsmouth none of us were appointed to our stations, but it was not long before the first lieutenant made out the bills, and I was sent to the foretop just as I am here. I don't know why it is, but I always like the foretop of a ship best, and without insinuating that it is due to me as captain of the top (which it isn't), I generally find that the chaps of the foretop are a smarter lot of hands than the main or mizen top-men. Now, sir, just look here, for instance, at our boys, ain't we always first at sending top-gallant masts and yards down; and when it comes to reefing top-sails at sunset, and 'shaking out' the reefs again next morning, I just want to know who 'spring their luffs' most nimble up the rigging when the 'old man' gives the word to 'man the rigging and lay aloft.' Why, only last night, when the skipper took a fit of extra smartness into his head and turned all hands out to 'quarters' in the middle watch, wasn't it our chaps as first 'showed a leg' out o' their hammocks. I know it was."

The good fellow was getting combative, and only wanted some outsider to uphold the superiority of one of the rival tops to induce him to "argufy" the matter, as he called it, in pretty strong language. This spirit of rivalry among the sailors of the respective tops was very strong among the old-class sailing ships of the navy, and was indeed the main-spring of that *esprit de corps* which made each ship in a squadron strive its utmost to be the smartest in the fleet, and was therefore encouraged by the officers, who, in fact, took as great a pride in the

superior excellence of their ships at "drill aloft," or at "general quarters," as the men themselves. It is to be hoped that this emulation, which forms the grand incentive to efficiency in all military services, will have nowadays something whereon to exercise itself, though, truth to say, the men-of-war of the present day, with their "turrets," and "smoke-stacks," and without the tall graceful masts and spars, with their fairy tracery of gear "running" and "standing," do not tend to foster a spirit of enthusiasm among the crew as seamen. They are, doubtless, most efficient for the purposes of war, but the general effect of living in an iron box, over which the sea makes a clean breach in bad weather when all is "battened down fore and aft," and which would be transformed into an iron coffin in the twinkling of an eye should a shot actually pierce the iron plates "between wind and water" during the course of an engagement,—I say, the general effect this knowledge would have on the mind of a sailor of the old school must be the reverse of elevating. It is one thing to fight your guns in open day, on airy decks, and with open portholes; but it is quite a different affair to be cooped up in a heated iron cylinder, blazing away at an enemy whom no one has ever seen, saving and excepting the captain of the gun, who is perched up overhead in a tower of observation, while the only evidence you have of being engaged with an enemy, besides the suffocating heat, is an occasional terrible stroke on the outer side of the iron turret,—a stroke so mighty that it might have been caused by a blow from the hammer of Vulcan himself, who, having mistaken the turret for an anvil, has proceeded to forge a bolt or two for the "King of Heaven." Stay, when I

say there is no other internal evidence, with the exception of the suffocating heat, that a general action is raging outside with some forts, or, perchance, with a Yankee *Monitor*, I am mistaken ; for ever and anon, as the projectiles strike with a prodigious "thud" on the coat of mail, every occupant of the cylinder in question is hurled to the ground, as though by the shock of an earthquake, while a sickening sensation of vertigo at each recurrent hit soon reduces one to a state of semi-idiocy.

To return to the sailor's story, from which we have been decoyed away by this lament for the things "that were, but are no more," but which, looking at the new mania for building ships of the *Inconstant* class, we opine may, to a certain extent, return again.

"Among the boys appointed to my top, was a thin, tall youth, who had never been to sea before. That was clear to me as soon as I saw him make a 'granny' for a 'reef' knot, but who, nevertheless, seemed desirous of learning his duties, and promised, too, to be a smart seaman. Whenever I see a boy wish to learn his duties, I take pains with him ; and as Reynolds, as he was called in the ship's books, told me early in the voyage that he hoped I would assist him in mastering his work as a young sailor, I took an interest in the lad, and protected him from the gibes and rough treatment of the other boys, who laughed at him for his quiet reserved manners, and want of proficiency in boyish sports ; in fact, Reynolds was not popular either among the men or boys. As he seemed delicate, I took care that he was not set to jobs beyond his strength, though he was quick enough at running up aloft, and showed no signs of fear when ordered to 'clear the dog-vane' by the boatswain. He

consorted with no one, this strange boy, except myself, and liked nothing better than being up in the top with me, lending a hand while I was doing some odd job or another, such as mending the broken ratlines, or, if I was employed down on deck 'serving a pennant,' he would 'pass the ball' of spunyarn for me: in short, as long as he was near me, he seemed to be quite satisfied, and would work, perhaps, for an hour, without saying a word, until I asked him what he was thinking about; when his face used to flush up as if he were confused, but he always answered, 'Nothing.' I could not make him out, but put down his liking for me to my having been kind to him when the other boys bullied or annoyed him.

"Well, as I said, the ship was bound for the China station, and we arrived at Hongkong, after rather a stormy passage. She was not suffered to lie long in port, but was sent out for a cruise. While knocking about in the China seas, our Captain had an attack of fever, which, after a lingering illness, carried him off. His was the first case on board, but after his funeral the fever broke out with great virulence, and seventeen men of the *Implacable's* crew died from the disease; several more fell ill, and it seemed as if it were going to decimate the ship's company. The ill-fated frigate was fumigated, then she was sent on a cruise to the north, where the climate was so much colder that it was hoped all hands would benefit by the change; but all was in vain. One after another the crew sickened, and as there was no doubt now on the minds of the surgeons on the station, that the fever had got into the timbers of the ship, she was ordered home as a last resource. No fresh hands were drafted on board her, for though undermanned for

one of Her Majesty's ships going on service, she had more than enough hands in health on board to navigate her to England. It was a sad sight to see the diminished crew mustering at 'divisions' in the daily routine, and to mark the fearful gaps death had made in the ranks of the brave sailors; no more could we carry out with the same degree of smartness the evolutions dear to the heart of men-o'-war's men bred in the service. Amid all this sickness and death one of the crew never quailed, but astonished all by his unvarying cheerfulness and devotion, — a person indeed he was who had been little thought of in past days of health, who had oftentimes been the butt at which the small wits had exercised the shafts of their ridicule, or on whom the more brutal of the jesters had played off coarse practical jokes. Where were now the scornful witticisms, or the unkind jokes? Where, indeed, were the jokers whose foul mouths so glibly uttered the curse, accompanied at times with a cuff? The grave, alas! had silenced for ever the tongues of some, though many still survived of those who formerly only addressed abuse to this individual; but all was changed, for none on board the frigate could now find words to qualify the unselfishness with which, as a voluntary nurse at a time when panic had struck into the hearts of the boldest, and when a settled gloom brooded over the vessel, their once-despised shipmate almost dissipated by his presence the fatal and demoralizing influence which an epidemic exerts in the confined decks of a ship. When any of the seamen, after a short terrible struggle with the grim tyrant death, felt his end nigh at hand, he feebly asked the doctor that 'Joe' (the affectionate nickname with which this per-

son was known) might be sent for. Again, when the apothecary shook his head, as he leant over another patient, who looked very thin and very pale, and whose eyes, sunken with the long-protracted fever, shone with a brilliance not of this world, the fast dying man knew what that shake of the head meant, and he faintly whispered his last request that, when 'Joe' was at liberty, would he come round and speak to him a few words? He could not die happy unless he first said 'good-bye,' and thanked him for all his gentle care; and he must ask him once more for forgiveness for all the cruel words he had spoken to him. And 'Joe' always came round to soothe the poor fellows, or to smooth the pillow of his dying shipmates. It was a wonder, every one said, from the acting captain of the ship to the terrified boys who looked with awe and wonder upon the young nurse, how he escaped contagion, for he held the hands of the expiring seamen while he read to them a few texts from the well-worn Bible he always had in his hand, and he moistened their throbbing brows, and gave them water to drink with his own delicate fingers, but yet death seemed awed by his presence; and though one would have thought that such ceaseless watching and want of necessary rest would have invited the attack of the desolating disease, yet the malady passed him by, and he seemed to lead a charmed life amidst all that suffering, when one touch of the fever must have sent him also to join his messmates, with them to be food for the fishes. I need scarcely add that 'Joe' and the once-despised lad, Reynolds, were one and the same person.

"The ship sailed for England; and when she had got

fairly clear of the Chinese waters, and, standing through the Straits of Sunda, spread her wings for the long flight across the Indian Ocean to the Cape of Good Hope, the dire disease showed signs of having worked itself out. No fresh cases occurred ; and before the high land of the south coast of Africa was sighted the fever had left the ship. Forty-seven lives had been lost ; and sixty-two fever-stricken men having been left behind, the crew was reduced to something above 200, although a good proportion of these again were convalescents from the epidemic, and some time elapsed before they were fit to return to duty.

“ The strong contrary winds the good frigate *Implacable* encountered off the Cape most effectually blew all disease out of the fever-heated ship, and after knocking about some three weeks, we rounded Southern Africa, and the vessel's head was turned homewards. With the withdrawal of the epidemic passed away the gloom which had so long weighed upon the spirits of the crew. Sailors are light-hearted fellows, and quickly forget sad memories ; very soon again could be heard the merry tones of the fiddle, as the gallant tars footed it deftly on the decks, and the laugh and the jovial sea-song with uproarious chorus again went round on the pleasant evenings, after the day's work was over, while the ship speeded on her way, making pleasant music as the water curled and foamed away under her bows, and every stitch of canvas, including the studding-sails, was spread below and aloft, so as to make the most of the ‘ South-east Trades,’ which we fortunately caught somewhat earlier than usual. And ‘ Joe,’ how did he get on since matters had so greatly changed for the better ?

He was just the same, always willing, indeed, but not a whit more so now than in the former season of death and despair. He was, as I have said, naturally a very reserved boy, and, now that we were approaching England, appeared to be more so than ever; indeed, at times he seemed overcome with fits of melancholy. It was in vain that the sailors strove to rouse him up on such occasions; he took their kindness in good part, but excused himself from joining in their amusements. But there was nothing among the crew like the old spirit of unkind banter regarding his effeminate voice or love of retirement; the men remembered with gratitude how unselfish and noble had been his conduct during the recent epidemic, when night and day he attended the sick and dying, until every individual on board the *Implacable* acknowledged with wonder and admiration that as a considerate and tender nurse no woman could have excelled his gentleness, while the convalescents were never tired of expatiating on the grateful touch of the small hand of 'Joe,' as he smoothed the pillow of the fevered patient, or moistened with water the head throbbing with the fierce heat of delirium. These grateful fellows felt anxious about their shipmate, for after the frigate crossed the line, and as every day brought her nearer home, so seemed to increase his melancholy. 'Joe' would eat but little, and became so thin and weak that the doctor declared that he would soon fall seriously ill, unless he could manage to take more food. In vain even were my endeavours to induce him to eat; he always said he ate as much as he wanted, and that he felt quite well, only a little weak.

At length an event happened which restored him to

his wonted spirits, and upon this my story hinges. One day (we were off the Western Islands, or Azores, at the time) it came on to blow very hard. The topsails were first single-reefed, and then within ten minutes, so greatly had the wind increased in violence, the hands were turned out to take in the second reef. Up aloft we all sprang, and with us—notwithstanding my advice to the contrary—went up young ‘Joe.’ Out I went as ‘captain of the top’ to the weather reef-earring—for that as you know is the post of the petty officers, ‘blow high or blow low’—and as usual ‘Joe’ came out to the yard-arm, and lent me a hand to haul the earring out to the ‘cringle.’ Weak as he was he was a smart hand aloft, and knew what he was about. Well, I sat a-straddle the yardarm, with one foot just touching the Flemish horse—as the small foot-rope at the extremity of the spar is called—and then, reeving the earring through the cringle, began hauling away with all my might, while at the same time all the hands on the other, or lee side of the yard were ‘lighting up to windward.’ ‘Yoo—ho—o—o—o ! lads ! “light along” there,’ cheerily said I, straining away at the rope’s end ; ‘come, bear a hand there in the bunt, or you will be having those lubbers in the main-top before us, and then, dash my buttons—if I don’t fall foul of some of you.’

“Joe did his utmost, but somehow the men did not second our efforts as they generally did—at least I thought so, and it ‘riled me.’ Just then I threw a glance down below on the decks, and on the sea around, which seemed as though it would engulf the struggling frigate.”

Reader, there is no grander sight beneath the vault of heaven than a view from the masthead of a tall

ship on the raging waters below ; from the deck your view is circumscribed, and the more stormy are the billows about you, the less can you take in of their grandeur. But from your eyrie in the crosstrees or yard-arm you have a bird's-eye view of the scene, and from thence the full sublimity of the tempest can be appreciated. Can any man who has thus watched the awe-inspiring sight do justice to it in human speech ? I have many a time clambered up aloft, the wind as it roared through the rigging seeming to snatch the very breath away from my mouth each time I, poor miserable mortal that I was, attempted to drink in the small modicum necessary to sustain life ; again the wind bursting out with increased fury, would bind me to the rigging with a power it were vain to contend against, while it swept onward with resistless might, screeching and shrieking through the blocks and cordage, and then out into open space, as though ten thousand souls of the lost were unchained and let loose in this upper world to bemoan their fate.

But the sea, the great ocean itself in a storm, how superlatively grand is the madness which seems to inspire every drop of water within its mighty basin, as for thousands of miles it foams and raves along, unimpeded in its course of tempestuous rage by aught else save the puny ark of human manufacture, which it tosses about hither and thither as though in scornful mood at this the most perfect specimen of man's handiwork ! Yet often, as we know but too well, the enraged element effects an entrance into the strongly-wrought structure, and breaks up the framework of wood and iron—as a pettish child, by one sweep of its hand, might destroy a house of toy

bricks—and scatters to the wind and enfolds within its relentless embrace the audacious mortals who dared to brave its treacherous waves in anything of their creation.

“Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore : upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man’s ravage, save his own.”

In such a storm and amid such a scene I have often mused on the magnificent audacity of man in trusting himself so far out on the open sea, where so many dangers constantly surround him.

Perhaps some such thoughts raced through the brain of the gallant sailor for a brief moment, as he cast his eye hurriedly around, but they were quickly dispelled as he pulled and tugged away with main force at the earring. “Yoo—ho—o—o—o—o ! boys !” again shouted Catharpine,* as the rain pelted into his face, almost blinding him, while it streamed down his back from off the little close-fitting man-o’-war’s-man’s cap, with the ribbon, having the ship’s name painted on it, fluttering in the gale. “Once more, boys,” he sang out in encouraging tones, “and together this time, and we shall get the reef-band well on to the yard-arm.”

Once more, in response, the topmen “lighted” the sail along together, when, ah ! there was a strong strain on the rope—a strain it could not bear, and the next moment the gallant captain of the top was seen to reel backwards on his dangerous seat in a manner it chilled one’s blood to see. The reef-earring had snapped in his hand ; and ere a finger could be moved—though, in truth, no

* We will relate the concluding part of Catharpine’s story in the third person, as he was not a witness of all that subsequently took place.

man could help another out in that perilous post,—the petty officer had lost his equilibrium. He was seen to clutch frantically at the "leech" of the sail, at the yard itself, at the air, at anything he could catch to save dear life, and then he fell off, and descended head-foremost down, down through the intervening space, until he plunged headlong into the boiling waters below! Every man aloft watched this fearful scene, but none could help, and for a moment it seemed as though all were petrified. None spoke, but a piercing scream burst forth from the lad at the yard-arm. That cry of despair and anguish seemed to have the effect of breaking the spell which bound the seamen. They all "laid in" and down below into the top, while a chorus of voices sang out "Man overboard!" "Man overboard!" The cry was taken up below, and in an instant the first lieutenant, who was the officer superintending the reefing of the top-sails, gave the word of command to "wear ship." This evolution is performed by "paying" the ship's head off from before the wind, and was necessary on the present occasion, partly because the reefing of the main topsail not having been completed before the accident, the yard had been lowered down on the "cap," thereby preventing the ship from being "put about" so quickly; but chiefly because it was blowing so heavily that there was less danger in "wearing" the ship, there being plenty of sea room, than in tacking.

At the order "wear ship," the men went to their stations with prompt discipline; the helm was put "hard up," the fore topmast stay-sail sheets were let fly, and the gallant frigate, quickly answering the steersman's hand, wheeled round on her heel like lightning, and was

soon bounding over the dark waters back again to the spot where the high-spirited petty officer had disappeared beneath the wave. It was a sorry chance, and few on board entertained the most remote hope of saving the life of the unfortunate seaman.

The ship seemed fully alive to the importance of the errand of mercy on which she was bent, and sped like an arrow from a bow straight whence she came. Some few—a hardy crew—stood by one of the boats, so as to be prepared to lower her should occasion require it; though there was little probability of the captain giving his sanction to such a course, for lowering a boat in so stormy a sea would have resulted almost to a certainty in sacrificing the lives of the crew. Sailors are a courageous, warm-hearted race, as the annals of the Lifeboat Institution prove; and half a dozen crews could have been found on board the *Implacable* to volunteer their services to save their popular shipmate now struggling for life somewhere not very far distant.

The ship soon arrived at the place where it was thought he had fallen overboard, but no signs were there of Catharpine. According to orders all hands had come down from aloft to their stations for “wearing” ship, and from the deck it was utterly impossible that anything could be seen beyond a few yards from the ship, for the waves had risen with a truly wonderful celerity, and were tossing about in mountainous billows, completely enclosing the ship at times in their unstable embrace.

For a minute or so after his fall from aloft, one of the quartermasters, who had kept his eye upon him, had marked the struggling little black speck, which rose on the crests of the giant waves, only the next moment to be

lost to sight again in the dark abysses which formed at their foot ; but now the quartermaster reported to the captain that during the time the frigate was "wearing" round, he had failed to distinguish the re-appearance of the drowning man on the foam-tipped waves, though the previous moment he had watched him descend the sides of a vast body of water.

We watched billow after billow loom up not far from the ship, to dissolve again in a moment,—like an Alpine mountain, when the dense fog which enshrouds its summit is withdrawn for a brief point of time, only again to fall over the scene, veiling from view the precipitous descent. The search was in vain ! No one knew where to turn, in what direction to look ; and all this time the great ship was ploughing her way through the troubled waters at a furious pace, and sending the "green seas" flying over the forecastle in continuous cascades, until the scuppers were choked up with the water ; while the spray flew in blinding showers right aft, and drenched the captain and the first lieutenant as they stood anxiously waiting for a glimpse of the drowning man.

The sailors ran up the rigging, and strained their eyes in vain for a sight of their messmate. Moments at such times seem like hours ; and as the ship hurried back over the very ground where the missing seaman fell from the yardarm, the hearts of all were moved with an anxious desire to espy his well-known broad chest buffeting bravely with the mighty ocean. He would fight a brave fight, they knew, before he succumbed to his destiny, whether his enemy was a mortal foe, or whether he was opposed by arms not of flesh. Alas ! there seemed to be no hope, for the most sanguine allowed to

themselves that no man, not even handsome Jack Catharpine, could combat long against such odds ; and besides, the man-of-war must by this time have passed the spot where the accident occurred, judging, that is, by the rate at which she was flying through the water.

With a sickening feeling of regret at his sad fate, for he was a general favourite among all hands, the sailors in the rigging began to descend from aloft ; the captain said to his first lieutenant, in a tone of real sorrow, " Well, Grainger, I'm afraid it's no use. You will have to mark the poor fellow D.D.* in the ship's books. Bring her up to the wind again on the port tack, as before."

Hardly were the words out of the commander's mouth, when a shrill voice was heard, from somewhere aloft, screaming out, " Port your helm. Hard a-port. Quick !"

The officers looked up, the helmsman looked up, all eyes from the crowded decks were raised aloft to see whence came the sound, and whose was the voice.

" Port. Hard a-port !" shouted the captain, echoing the mandate without a moment's hesitation.

Round flew the wheel like lightning, and the sturdy old frigate, answering her helm quick as thought, turned her head round to starboard. The sails began to shiver with the blast as their " leeches" lifted.

" Port braces," yelled the first lieutenant, in stentorian tones. " Brace up ;" and in a trice the yards were braced up on the starboard tack.

" Steady !" screamed out again the shrill pipe from aloft.

" Steady !" said the captain.

* Discharged. Dead.

"Steady!" echoed the helmsman, as the wheel flew round again, and the frigate's bow responded, like magic, to the touch of the hand abaft.

It was soon evident whence had come that voice, which every one, from the captain down to the youngest ship's boy, had obeyed with such well-timed alacrity, for the slight figure of "Joe" was seen swiftly descending the topmast rigging from the cross-trees where he had been ensconced all this time, and from which, as from an eagle's eyrie, he could survey the wide acreage of raging waters. Again, from the top, which he had by this time reached, the youth called out, "Starboard a point. Quick. He is under the bows!"

Half a dozen seamen, at the same moment, rushed forward to the topgallant forecastle. The ship plunged her bows deep into the hollow of a sea, sending the crest of the wave right over the assembled group, while, at the same time, an enormous billow gathered like an alpine avalanche a little way a-head, and upon the summit could be seen the head of a man struggling to keep himself afloat, and still striking out bravely amidst the chaos of confused waters around him. It was Catharpine; he still lived, and would soon be almost within arm's length of the *Implacable* and his sympathizing fellow-sailors. Now, he was actually under the ship's dolphin-striker, and once more the frigate raised her vast bulk above him as if to impale him on the spar, which, fitted at the bowsprit end, always points downwards, like a harpoon in position, to strike any fish disporting itself under the ship's bows. A second passes, and the gallant Catharpine is washed away from under the "forefoot" of the frigate, barely saved from being driven over by the

copper-sheathed cutwater of the hull which, like a plough, cleaves through the water night and day without stop or hindrance.

The writer has passed under the bows of a heavy man-of-war, and can recall, with a shudder, the awful sensation that thrills through every nerve as the broad front is lifted high above your head, with the water, suddenly raised with it in its upward movement, flowing down the timbers again in a stream, while the "blue sea" taken on board, gushes out of the hawsepipes in a briny stream, like the tears from the eyeless sockets of some monster of the deep.

But Catharpine is providentially washed clear of the cutwater by the wave it hurls aside right and left of it on its onward career. A dozen rope's-ends are thrown to him, but, alas ! the throwers are too eager, and either do not cast the lines sufficiently far enough out for him to seize them, or do not gather enough "slack" in hand. As is the tendency of a stormy sea, the backwash of the water flings him farther away from the willing hands stretched out to help him ; the vessel plunges along, the sailor is now about on a level with the ship's waist ; now, dreadful to relate, he is abaft the main mast, and passes near the counter. 'Tis a painful sight to see a man going to his doom with a hundred eyes gazing at him, and a hundred arms eager to save him ; and safety was so near too ! He raises his hands, as it were, in agonized supplication ; above the din of the roaring waves and the shrieking wail of the wind through the rigging, as if, like a fiend, the tempest already exulted in a fresh victim, his voice is clearly audible as he cries out, " Quick, quick ! a rope's end, or I am lost. Oh, save me ! "

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fresh effort, and the periodical lull, which is so peculiar a feature of the severest storm, came over the scene; everything, in short, favoured this final attempt. The buoy whirled through the air, the rope was drawn quickly, and without any loss of momentum, out of the practised hand of the youth, and, straight as an arrow from the bow of an unerring marksman, the cork ring fell over the head and shoulders of the foretopman! A cheer, a loud triumphant hurrah burst forth from all the spell-bound witnesses of this singular scene, officers and men indiscriminately "clapped on" to the rope. Catharpine was drawn up to the ship's side, two or three of the strongest among the sailors jumped over the rail to assist him on board as he was hauled up, clinging to the buoy which was under his arm-pits; and thanks, in a great measure, to the temporary lull of the storm, he was soon safely landed on the deck.

His preserver, overcome with the varied emotions awakened by this trying scene, murmured, "Thank God!" and fainted away by the side of the man whom he, and he alone, had restored to life by as wonderful an exhibition of prompt courage, presence of mind, fertility of resource, and accuracy of aim, as was ever witnessed on the decks of a man-of-war.

The boy "Joe," though the most concerned, had alone retained his coolness sufficiently to bethink him that, in such a storm, he could not hope to distinguish his friend above the level of the deck, and that, if once he lost sight of his struggling form amid those towering waves, he would fail, except by the merest chance, in again reaching such a tiny speck. So he never moved his eyes from the head of his messmate, and thus, wh

the ship wore round, *he* alone could guide the helmsman to the exact spot.

Thus a second time was established the superiority of the once-despised Reynolds, who had already won all hearts by his unselfish devotion at a time of sickness and universal despondency. The preserved and the preserver lay side by side on the deck, to all appearance lifeless. "Joe," however, soon rallied, and, true to his former character, solicited and obtained permission to nurse the friend whom he had saved from a watery grave. For many days Catharpine was so seriously ill that his life was despaired of, but, owing chiefly to attentive nursing, and the care also of a good naval surgeon, he slowly rallied, and was able, in course of time, to converse. You may be sure the first use he made of his power of speech was to thank, with all the fervour of his gratitude, the noble boy who had so marvellously rescued him from a terrible fate. In his protestations of undying thankfulness he implored "Joe" to name anything he could do for him, either now or when they landed at Plymouth, after the ship was paid off.

It was about a fortnight subsequent to the accident, as they were alone together in the sick bay, that Catharpine, who had that day for the first time felt himself strong enough to sit up in his bed, solemnly conjured his preserver to ask him for something that might, in however small a measure, relieve him of the weight of obligation under which he was placed by his friend's devotion. Reynolds listened to his companion while he thus spoke, but said nothing in reply. He seemed buried in deep meditation; his delicate features flushed occasionally as the thoughts, called into existence by this declaration, chased each other through his brain; but it

would have required a clever physiognomist to have fathomed the feelings which were uppermost.

Catharpine awaited a reply, and looked anxiously into the face of his volunteer nurse. A long silence ensued. At length the younger of the two friends, turning to the couch of the sick man, addressed him as follows :—

“ You say that from your heart you would rejoice if I would name anything I wished, and that if in your power you will grant it. You do not care what my request may be, but you will promise beforehand to comply with it. Is it so? Do I understand you aright?”

“ Joe,” said the sick man, “ what I have said I will abide by. Whatever it is in my power to offer, even to laying down the life which you have given back to me, is yours before you ask it. I solemnly swear it.”

“ Well, then, Catharpine, I will first tell you a story. Don’t be impatient, it will not be a long yarn, and then I promise you, I will end by making my request.”

“ In a little village near Plymouth there lived a young sailor, as it might be you, Catharpine, for I have heard you say that you came from the neighbourhood of Plymouth. He went to sea in the navy as a boy, and quickly rose to be an able seaman. Now, he fell in love with a young woman; she was a fine bouncing girl, handsome and well-shaped, and with a killing pair of black eyes; indeed, very much like what I have heard you describe your sweetheart, Agnes, to be. Suppose we call her Agnes, just while I am telling you my tale.

“ Agnes liked them an-o’-war’s-man well enough to flirt with, but she did not love him, although she made the honest sailor believe she did. She kept him dangling after her, for she was a proud thing, and dearly liked to see how

all the young unmarried girls in the village where they lived envied her good fortune in having such a beau, but she liked another person, a shopman, better. I don't mean to say she loved this other person ; for, truth to tell, she was a sordid selfish creature, and though Jack Bowline, good honest fellow, thought she was above board and as open as the day, he was mistaken. Agnes had two strings to her bow, and intended to marry whichever of the two—for they were both dying to have her—could furnish her with the more comfortable home. But alas ! for poor Agnes, she fell a prey to her vanity and love of admiration. A dashing young naval officer—flag-lieutenant to the admiral of the port he was—saw her in an evil hour, and took a fancy to her. He was a handsome youth certainly, with fair curly hair, and a frank sailor-like manner. It was while Jack Bowline was away on one of his voyages that they became acquainted ; how, I never knew. The young lieutenant gave the girl rings and dresses, took her about, and finally promised her marriage on the death of his father, who, he said, was a very old man, and from whom he had great expectations, but which would never be fulfilled were he to marry beneath him. By these and other specious arguments, he induced the young girl, after going through the form of a secret marriage in France, to live with him as his wife. Whether he acted in good faith or no, never can be known, for he was ordered on foreign service to China, and was killed in an affray with natives while travelling inland for pleasure with some friends. Agnes always asserted that she was really married, but she had no certificate to prove it, and those people who knew of the affair—and they were not many, for she kept the matter very secret—and the few

to whose knowledge it had subsequently come, pitying the girl, held their tongues, shook their heads, and remained incredulous. Her old lover, the shopman, had now become foreman, but he, hearing of the affair, would have nothing to say to her. Jack Bowline knew nothing of all this, for he had been away at sea during the secret marriage, if marriage there was, and Jack, on his return, would in all probability be accepted by the jilted Agnes. I have not heard, and shall not hear till I reach my home, near Plymouth, how the matter has ended, and whether honest Jack has been taken in by the handsome brunette; but this I happen to know, and should much like to get to his ears, for I take a great interest in him, that there is a girl in the village who has known him ever since they used to play together as little children, but of whom he takes no notice since his infatuation for the deceitful Agnes, though, perhaps, he may have forgotten her; I say I should like the seaman, whom I have called Jack Bowline, to know how the case stands, and that there is a true heart who loves him for himself alone, and who would go through anything, ay! through fire and *water* too, to preserve him and make him happy."

"Joe" had concluded, and as his musical voice, full of passion and earnestness, ceased to echo through the quiet "sick bay," there was a moment's pause. Catharpine had listened silently to the tale; at first with a languid interest, but presently something in the narrative seemed to rivet his attention. He moved on his swing cot, outside of which he was lying fully dressed for the first time since his accident, and turned his eyes on the speaker whom he regarded with a perplexed look. Gradually as the narrative proceeded his face assumed an expression of intense interest. The blood rushed over

his pale, colourless countenance; he trembled violently. As the speaker's voice waxed louder and more earnest his emotion seemed quite to overpower him, until, when the former uttered in trembling accents and with a marked emphasis the concluding words "through fire and *water* too," his agitation reached its climax. The petty officer jumped from off his bed, and putting his hand, shaking with weakness and excitement, on his companion's shoulder, cried out, "Say! Who are you?"

The boy raised his head: his eyes were filled with tears as he essayed to speak; but the effort was vain. Not a word could he articulate, but he threw himself at the feet of the captain of the foretop, and sobbed out, "I am Margaret Macnamara. Oh! forgive me. I saved you from the devouring sea. I would save you also from that woman! It was for love I have followed you through such scenes, and for so many thousands of miles."

* * * * *

"Well, Catharpine, and what did you do?" both of us youngsters broke in with in chorus.

"Do, sir? I just folded her to my heart, and we betrothed ourselves to each other there and then. The ship got into Plymouth Sound a day or two afterwards, and we were 'spliced.' And God bless her! she has been the best of wives to me ever since."

"And the story she told you was of yourself?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, every word of it. She saved my life, and she also saved me from life-long unhappiness, for poor Agnes came to no good. And that was the way, gentlemen, I came by my wife."

THE END.

